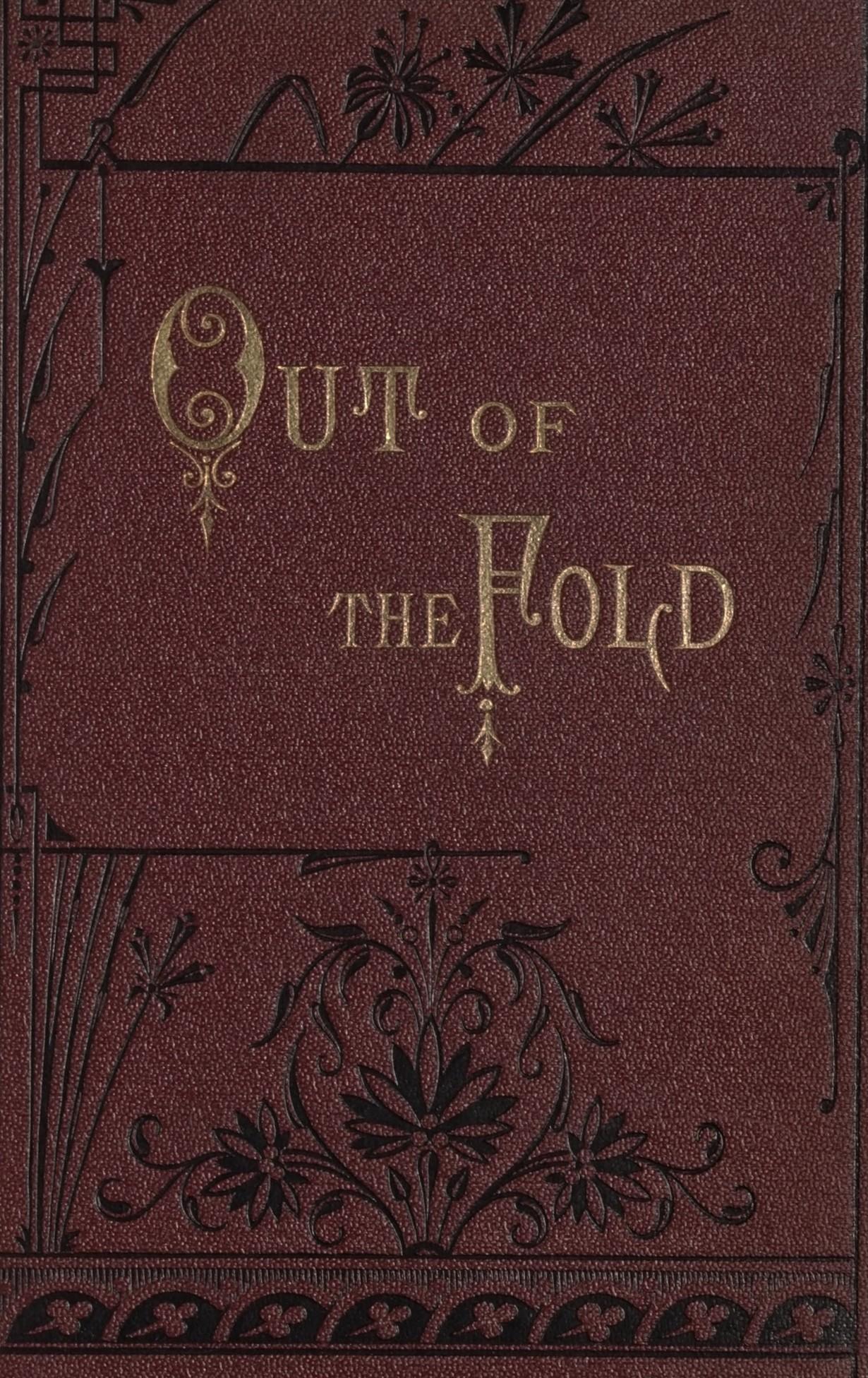


OUT OF
THE FOLD



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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



OUT OF THE FOLD.

“East or west, home is best.”

BY

SARAH CHESTER LOGIE,

AUTHOR OF “HANDSOME HARRY,” “HER LITTLE WORLD,” “OUR
THREE BOYS,” ETC.

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OUT OF THE FOLD.

CHAPTER I.

LINDA was sitting on the edge of a bank that ran steeply from the sidewalk to the street. Her feet were dangling towards a ditch of very muddy water, but her head was held so high that her brother Tommy wondered what kept her neck from breaking. Her feet were getting sadly plashed by Tommy, but her eyes were looking so far away through the air towards the tree-tops that she did not know it.

"Linda! Linda!" called her mother.

"She's in the clouds again," said Tommy.

"And where are you, Tommy?"

"In the ditch, playing frog," said Tommy. "She ought to have taken better care of me."

"Linda," said her mother, "are you dreaming again, after all I have said to you? Take Tommy out of the ditch; and where is the baby?"

By this time Linda's dreams were over, and she was pulling Tommy out by both arms and looking up and down the street for a runaway baby.

"I'm so tired of them all," she thought. "I wish I could have a little peace for a while."

"There, Tommy!" she said, seating him on the green, "do n't you stir till I find baby."

He was discovered by-and-by behind a neighbor's gatepost, munching on a piece of an apple he had found in the street.

"Give it to Linda, dear," said the big sister.

"No, no, no! mine appy!" shrieked the baby.

After which force became necessary, and Linda had a screaming, kicking, struggling mass of flesh and muscle to carry home.

It was a warm day, and the baby, heavy at any time, nearly overcame her now. She felt as if she should sink down on the ground, never to rise again, before she could reach the door. But at last the baby was shut in the hall, and then Linda did sink down on the carpet, and hugging her knees rocked back and forth in despair.

"Oh, I have had such a dreadful day," she said.

"It is very warm," said her mamma, as she comforted the baby.

"I do n't mind that very much," said Linda. "It is the children; they are wearing me out, mamma. I am so tired of Tommy's getting in the ditch, and the baby's running away, and Polly's meddling, and breaking and tearing all the pretty things I like best, that I do n't know what to do."

"Poor Linda!" said her mamma.

"Don't you wish there were baby-schools, mamma, where you could send children and keep them till they were old enough to be nice—nine or ten, you know?" said Linda, in her dreamy tone. Her eyes were looking through the window, as if they were trying to see the farthest clouds. "Or don't you wish babies never cried and ran away, and that little boys like Tommy liked to keep clean and sit still and make pictures on the slate, and that children like Polly were fond of sewing for their dolls and keeping their play-rooms in order? There are so many nice things children could do without getting into mischief. You say that I was never mischievous like the others."

"No, you were such a quiet little thing," said her mother. "You were merry, too; but you would sit in a corner and play mother with your little rubber-doll all the morning; and you were so dainty about your eating. You never put your head in a bowl of milk and tried to drink like a dog. And such a way as Tommy has of putting both hands in the oatmeal, and then trying to get the two handfuls in his mouth at once," she said, laughing. "I can't imagine you ever doing such a thing, Linda. You were a dear, quiet, gentle little thing, and used to sit looking up in the air with your big eyes full of dreams when you were six months old, just the way you do now. Papa often used to say that you would make something."

A proud, pleased little smile flitted over Linda's face, and she opened her eyes wider and stared into vacancy a little harder than was quite natural.

"I have often thought," she said, "that I would write a little poem on 'The Paradise of Children; or, the Good Children's Garden,' or some such subject."

"I found a little scrap that you left in the arbor the other day," said her mamma, "and papa said the rhymes were very pretty."

Linda smiled again, and felt encouraged to say more about "The Good Children's Garden."

"I think I will have them all wear velvet shoes," she said, as if there were a vision of velvet shoes before her eyes up there in the air. Her head was thrown so far back that Tommy would certainly have thought it was going to tumble off behind if he had been there. "Some of them," she continued, still gazing towards cloudland, "some of them can have black velvet embroidered with gold, and some of them blue velvet embroidered with silver, and some of them might go barefooted to show their dear little pink toes; but they shall all step softly, mamma, just as softly in their bare feet as if they had on velvet shoes. They are all going to have very low voices, too, and almost whisper when they speak, and just laugh the tiniest little bits of laughs. I wont have any mud-puddles in the garden, nothing but lovely little clean silver ponds, so they never can get muddy if they want to. And they would

no more think of meddling with anything! Why, I would n't have a child in the garden that would pick a flower without permission—the way Tommy did my tulips. I tell you, mamma, there wont be a mischievous or noisy or dirty child there."

"O dear!" said mamma, glancing at the dear baby in her lap, who was just finishing the lump of sugar she had given him for comfort when Linda brought him in. He was very dirty, first from the apple Linda had taken away, and afterwards from the sugar. He was very happy with his mouth all sweet and sticky, and expressed it by a great number of merry shouts, which Linda had to scream down as she talked to mamma. He was so full of mischief that mamma could hardly keep a hairpin in her hair; the bow was off her neck, crumpled up in his sticky fingers; her collar was flying, candy marks were all over the shoulder of her dress, her cheek was also smarting from a scratch which the little fingers had given her playfully; but he was such a darling, oh, such a cunning little fat, mischievous, dirty darling, as could not be found anywhere else in America; and mamma loved and admired him so much that she said, "Oh, dear Linda!" two or three times.

"Do n't you think that would be nice," said Linda, "to have them always clean and quiet and never getting into mischief?"

"O dear, no!" said mamma, going off into a great

romp with the baby, that made him ten times noisier than before. "But I'll tell you how it is, Linda."

It was some time, however, before she could tell her anything; for the baby suddenly discovered that he was sleepy, and stopped in the midst of his frolicking to sit up as stiff and still as a judge. Then he scowled at his mamma and put on a severe, solemn look as if he was astonished at her mirth; then he turned his back to Linda, ducked his head under his mamma's arm, and, like an ostrich that hides its head and thinks no one can see it because it can see no one, so the baby, because he had made a little night for himself under mamma's arm, fancied that it was night everywhere, and that he was as much hidden from the world as the world was hidden from him. That was one of his cunningest tricks, and Linda smiled and said, "The darling!" while mamma, kissing the back of the soft little head just once and very gently, began to sing.

Of course Linda kept perfectly still, for no one was allowed to speak a word after the head went under the arm, except baby himself, who occasionally demanded the songs he wished to hear. This gave Linda a beautiful opportunity to go on with her dreaming and make further plans for the Children's Garden. One thing she determined—that there should be only beautiful lullabies sung in her garden, sweet, gentle words and soft, smooth melodies, which of course would make it neces-

sary that the little ones should all have good taste in the selection of music. It annoyed her to have the baby interrupt her pleasant dreaming with

“ Tweedle dee, mamma !”

And how many times, she wondered, did her mamma repeat,

“ ‘ Tweedle dee, tweedle dee, said the fiddlers ! ’ ”

She thought the words very uninteresting, and old King Cole and his fiddlers were such ordinary people !

Then the baby roared,

“ Hog !”

And over and over and over her mother sang,

“ ‘ To market, to market, to buy a fat pig ;
Home again, home again, jiggelty jig.
To market, to market, to buy a fat hog ;
Home again, home again, jiggelty jog.’ ”

How could the baby like to hear it so many times, and purr like a happy little kitten to show how well it pleased him !

“ Really,” thought Linda, “ babies’ tastes ought to be improved. Perhaps I can write a sweet little lullaby some day that they will all like.”

By this time he had purred himself to sleep, and the “ tweedle dee ” and “ jiggelty jog ” ceased. Mamma laid him down and came back to explain to Linda how it was.

CHAPTER II.

"You know I often tell you, Linda," said mamma very gently, "that I am afraid you dream too much."

Linda did not look as well pleased as when mamma had praised the little poem which was the result of her dreaming. "Little girls cannot live in the clouds and on the earth at the same time," said mamma.

It was too much like a sermon to please Linda altogether, and she immediately withdrew her gaze from that distant spot in the air and fastened it on the carpet. She was in cloudland no longer, but a little girl at her mamma's feet listening eagerly for her next words.

For those words were always precious to Linda, even when they were rebukes. Mamma's rebukes were so kind that they never hurt very much, and so just that one could not dispute them. And how delightful it was to have her all to one's self once in a while.

It was seldom that these two mothers of the family had a quiet time to themselves. Either Linda had a baby to take care of when mamma was quietly sewing and could talk to her as the needle flew; or mamma had a baby demanding all her attention when Linda was at leisure and longed for an opportunity to pour out all the thoughts and perplexities which were in her mind.

They could never be quite sure of an interview until the children were asleep for the night. Then papa generally wanted an interview himself. But sometimes he went to his office. Sometimes after Linda had turned out the gas and got into bed, and was looking toward the moon or stars, or any shining thing that happened to be in the sky, through the window at the foot of her bed—sometimes when she lay in that dreamy, comfortable state which comes just before the real dreams, she heard the front door slam.

No one else ever made such a noise as her papa, not even Tommy with his new shoes and tin trumpet; and mamma often told him that he was the greatest baby in the family. Such laughing and whistling, such racing and romping and knocking about of the furniture as followed papa's entrance; and he thought no more of slamming a door than of humming a tune.

"It is fortunate that you did not marry a woman with nerves," mamma used to say.

But if his wife had no nerves his eldest daughter had, and though there were times when she enjoyed the romp quite as well as the baby, there were also times when she longed for peace in which to meditate, and there were times when she wished that she and mamma could run away and hide in a cave by the sea, where no sound would ever reach them but the soft lapping of the waves. It was a little poem about the lapping waves which her papa had found in the

arbor and praised ; and Linda had been delighted with the praise, as he had a habit of making great fun of her poems.

So if the front door slammed while Linda lay looking at the shining things in the sky she knew her papa had gone to the office, and that dear mamma would come up for a talk. Mamma always came to tuck her in and say Good-night, but she only stayed a moment if papa was below.

When Linda heard mamma's slippers stepping softly stair over stair she felt very anxious lest a baby who had slept through the slamming of the door should be awakened by a footstep ; and always drew a long sigh of relief when mamma reached her bed safely. She forgot the shining things outside her window, she forgot how comfortable and sleepy, how nearly at the gates of dreamland she had been. She was back in the land where her mamma dwelt, with her hand clasping the dearest hand in the world, with all the thoughts and fancies she had had no opportunity to utter crowding their way from her brain to her tongue ; with so much to say that she never got through by the time her mamma must go.

"I don't believe you ever would get through, darling, if I should stay all night," her mamma sometimes said.

Often Linda talked herself so sleepy that it was her own fault she could not finish ; often the door-bell

rang and mamma had to go to the parlor; but oftener than either a child screamed for its mother, and she ran to it through the dark as fast as her swift slippers would take her.

If the bedtime talks were so rare and precious, how much more rare and precious were those talks that sometimes occurred during the busy day. If her mamma had scolded her very severely Linda would not have cared much as she lay at her feet rejoicing that she had her all to herself. It seemed too good to be true that they were not to be interrupted by Tommy, Polly, or the baby. Baby was sound asleep, Polly out spending the afternoon, Tommy—but where was Tommy?

Linda was longing to hear what mamma should say next when that question began to whisper through her mind, "Where is Tommy? where is Tommy? where is Tommy?" she kept hearing as mamma's gentle rebukes also fell upon her ears.

"I am quite willing that you should dream sometimes," said mamma. "Find all the pretty fancies that you can up in the clouds, dear, and then bring them down and put them into rhyme if you like. It can do no one any harm if you are neglecting no one at the time. All that I have to say is, dream when you dream and work when you work, Linda. If you find it impossible to write a poem when you are taking good care of the children, you will find it just as im-

possible to take good care of them when you are dreaming out a poem. Mischievous little boys and girls who live on the earth cannot be properly watched by a little girl who lives in the clouds. You know what generally happens when you are in the clouds and Tommy down below you—why, Linda, where is Tommy?"

Linda sighed deeply. She knew that their quiet talk had come to a sudden end, just as it always did.

"I thought we would have a little peace for once," she said; "but Tommy's always lost when there's nothing else to spoil our talks."

"We have had a longer talk than usual at any rate," said mamma. "Let us be thankful for that. I am sure I feel greatly indebted to master baby for not interrupting us. And now we will see how my little dreamer has profited by our talk and whether she will go down in the ditch or up in the clouds to hunt for Tommy."

"I'll go to the ditch," said Linda, jumping up and kissing mamma. "I am sure to find him there."

It was supposed that Tommy would remain in any ditch until he was pulled out, so great was his fondness for muddy water; and Linda had no idea that she should not find him where she had left him.

She ran to the sidewalk and looked down the bank, and from one corner to the other, but saw no small boots wading and splashing anywhere.

"O dear, he's run away," she said, "and I shall have to hunt all over, and it's so hot this afternoon."

There was a wagon crawling slowly down the street, and she looked eagerly to see if there were any small boots dangling behind; then she wondered if they could have gone off on any other wagon, and whether they might not be out in the country by this time, and what she would do about it in that case. She could never follow Tommy over miles of country road through heat and dust, and yet she did not want to lose him. Though he was such a bother, she was sure that she would rather tramp miles after him than lose him altogether. But she would first search the neighborhood, as it was quite probable that he had gone to some one's back-door begging cookies, and was covering some one's kitchen-floor with crumbs by this time.

"Did he have his sling, Linda?" her mamma called, as she was turning towards Dr. Anderson's.

Yes; Linda remembered that she had seen a sling by the side of the ditch. She looked for it all along the ditch, but it was gone, and she knew that Tommy and the sling must have gone together.

"Oh," said mamma, "he has been shooting Mr. Mitchell's chickens again."

"O mamma, Mr. Mitchell told him he would put him in jail if he ever broke another chicken's wing," said Linda. "Do you suppose he has?"

"You had better go and see," said mamma, laughing.

Linda forgot the heat; she was too alarmed to be encouraged by mamma's laugh; she ran down the street and across it, through clouds of dust, though there was a crosswalk close by that would have taken her to Mr. Mitchell's just as quickly. With her hair flying, her cheeks burning, her eyes wild and bright, and her shoes white with dust, she appeared before Mr. Mitchell, who was in his back-yard sawing wood as briskly as if it were not an afternoon in August.

He was a little, shrivelled old man, and when Linda drew herself up to her full height she felt quite as tall as the little man bending over the saw.

"Where is my brother?" she asked sternly.

She caught her breath to be ready for more conversation.

Mr. Mitchell looked up from under his old straw hat, which the suns of many summers had painted all sorts of colors, and Linda judged from his smile that it gave him pleasure to see her so agitated and dusty and out of breath.

She closed her mouth and determined to become composed, and felt herself very tall indeed as she drew nearer the bent figure and demanded in sterner tones,

"Where is my brother?"

He might as well have been deaf and dumb, for all the attention he paid to her. How provoking to have

him rise and bend, saw and smile, so slowly and coolly, while she was half-wild with the heat of the sun and the fears in her heart. She felt as if she would like to shake an answer out of him ; but she knew Mr. Mitchell of old, and was perfectly well aware that an answer could not be shaken from him, or forced from him by any means ; so, although she was still angry and afraid for Tommy's safety, she pinched her fingers together and said as calmly as possible,

"Wont you please answer me, Mr. Mitchell ? Where 's Tommy ?"

For a minute the saw went back and forth, the little figure bent and rose, and a provoking smile appeared from under the variegated hat ; then he replied in his slow, wheezing tones,

"Where 's my white chicken ?"

"Is—is—anything the matter with it ?" gasped Linda.

She hardly dared ask if it was killed, a horrible fear passing through her mind that perhaps in that case Tommy might be accused of murder.

"You just come along," said Mr. Mitchell, leaving his saw in the middle of the stick and beckoning Linda to follow him as he walked towards the woodpile.

He walked the whole length of the woodpile and around the other end towards the corner nearest the house, while Linda followed, "feeling," she told her mother afterwards, "as if she was going to a funeral."

And there at the end of the woodpile, up in the corner, lay a little white chicken, so still that Linda knew there could be no life under its wings. It was such a pretty little plump fellow, and so white and downy, that she could not blame Mr. Mitchell for being sorry that it was dead.

"Oh," she said, "what a pity!"

"There's a good meal spoiled for me," said he. "I'd have had a dinner out of him in less 'n a month's time."

Linda's heart was not as tender towards Mr. Mitchell's loss when she found that he was regretting the chicken as a dinner; and she felt sorry for the poor little dead thing that had not a more loving mourner. How she would have loved it as a pet if it had been hers! She would have cuddled it up in her neck, and smoothed its pretty feathers, and kept them white with soap and water, and she would have given it a funeral, and cried for it, and written a poem, perhaps, on "The Dead Chicken." The idea of thinking about dinners in connection with anything that was almost as sweet as a baby! She felt herself getting quite angry at Mr. Mitchell again. But it never occurred to her to be angry at Tommy for causing all the trouble.

Well, there was the chicken, but where was Tommy all this time? She hardly dared ask the question again, so she tried another.

"Did Tommy—did Tommy?" she began.

"Yes, he did," said Mr. Mitchell savagely, laying his finger on the chicken's head, where Linda saw some spots of blood. "But it's the last time he'll sling a stone at any of my chickens' heads, mind ye! That little slinger of his has gone where he wont see it again in a hurry."

"Did you break it?" said Linda.

"That's what I've done," said he. "In more'n forty bits, as you can see for yourself by going around the house to look at the pieces."

"Oh, I'm so glad," said Linda. "Mamma will be delighted. He is always firing things at us."

Mr. Mitchell looked rather sorry that he had given pleasure to any of Tommy's family, and was glad that Linda asked him just then where her brother was, for it gave him a chance to speak fiercely,

"Where you wont see him in a hurry," said he.

He was on his way back to the woodpile, with Linda following closely.

"Tell me what you have done with him!" she cried. "Have you put him in jail? Have you dared to put him in jail? I shall go directly and tell my father."

Mr. Mitchell evidently did not wish her to do that, for he said at once,

"I've got him safe in a little jail of my own not far from here."

As he nodded towards the barn Linda concluded that Tommy was there; and though it was not pleas-

ant to learn that he was locked up, it was certainly a relief to know just where he was at last.

"I don't think you have any right to lock my little brother in your barn," she said. "I shall go and tell my mother."

"And she'll tell you it serves him right," said Mr. Mitchell, going back and forth with the saw again. "She said, 'You teach him a lesson if he does it again, Mr. Mitchell. That's what he needs.' Your mother and I understand this case."

"My mother does n't want her little boy to be treated as if he was wicked enough to go to jail. I know she does n't," said Linda haughtily. "And I shall go and tell her all about it."

CHAPTER III.

WHEN she left Mr. Mitchell and the woodpile, Linda was quite angry at the old man, very, very sorry for her poor little brother, anxious to get him out of prison as soon as possible, and sure that her mamma would help her about it. But as she drew nearer and nearer home she felt less and less sure of her mamma's sympathy; she remembered how she had laughed when she spoke of Tommy's shooting chickens, and she wondered if it could be true that she had given Mr. Mitchell permission to punish him. If everybody had forsaken Tommy, surely Linda must befriend him. If he had only her left, a thousand times more would she do and dare for him than if the whole world were on his side. She felt quite equal to breaking down the barn-door, if that should be necessary in Tommy's behalf. All sorts of plans for his benefit were rushing through her mind, when she happened to feel the refreshing shadow of a tree over her burning face.

It was so cool and delicious after her race in the sun that she paused a moment. Here was a good place to calm her excited thoughts and consider wisely what step she should take towards releasing her poor little Tommy.

The grass was green and soft; it was meant for a cushion for tired wayfarers, one could see that at a glance; so the tired little girl dropped down to rest, feeling as grateful as if some one had just offered her an upholstered armchair. And she accepted the breeze which came gently through the shade of the leaves as she would have taken a fan, and could not have been more comfortable if she had just been received into some one's parlor with every attention.

And now what should be done for Tommy, poor little Tommy who had killed the poor little chicken? Was it Tommy she had to consider, or the chicken? O Tommy, of course. And yet somehow the chicken's tragic fate filled her with dreamy, mournful thoughts. It was the picture of a plump little fowl, not the picture of a plump little boy, which she saw as she gazed up into the shadow of the tree.

How sad for a chicken to die and have no one to mourn it! Poor little chicken! mourned only for the dinner which it might have made, never because it was so white and soft and downy. Linda felt rhymes jingling in her head, and put her hand in her pocket; but she found neither paper nor pencil, and so resolved to commit to memory whatever she might compose:

“Poor little chicken white,
I am sorry for your plight.
It seems so very sad to die,
And not have anybody cry,

Excepting one old man,
Who would like to cook you in a pan.
If you had been my chicky dear,
I would have cried many a tear,
And put you in a little grave
Where the wild willows wave.
Your little wings will never fly,
And so I must bid you good-by.
If you had been my little pet,
I would have loved you dearly yet.”
I am very sorry that Tommy——”

* * * * *

Tommy? Where was Tommy? O Tommy was her little brother; and she had been in the clouds, and he was locked in the barn, and she was going to let him out, and she had been wasting time in dreaming. Was it possible that she had been so heartless as to lie down there and dream while Tommy was a prisoner? Linda was never more ashamed of her dreaming. She did not stop to consider *how* she should let him out now; she only ran away as fast as she could fly to do it.

She ran around Mr. Mitchell’s house on her tiptoes, and peeped at him from behind a tree. He was still going back and forth with the saw, without the slightest regard to the poor little prisoner in the barn. Should she stoop to coaxing? Should she go and beg the cross old man to forgive Tommy? No, she felt sure that it would do no good. She was inclined to think that both Mr. Mitchell and mamma meant to

punish Tommy in a way that he would remember, and that she would not succeed in getting either of them to help her.

The tree behind which she was hiding was shady, and moss grew like velvet all around its roots; but she felt no temptation to sit down and dream. Her face might burn and her head throb, but she was thoroughly ashamed by this time of having neglected Tommy for a moment, and had no thought but to let him out as quickly as possible.

She ran back to the street and all the way around the block till she came to a house on the next street which was directly behind Mr. Mitchell's. Its back-yard joined Mr. Mitchell's by a high fence, and just back of the fence stood the barn where Tommy was imprisoned.

Linda opened the gate and looked anxiously up at the windows, for she feared that the people who lived there might come out and ask what right a strange little girl had to go walking through their yard.

However, she walked on just as if she had a right, and saw no one but an astonished servant, who gazed at her from the kitchen window, but did not come out to inquire what she wanted. When she reached the garden she ran, and was soon at the high board fence.

She peeped through a crack, and could see Mr. Mitchell still bobbing and sawing. Now if she could only get over the fence without his seeing her, she

would investigate the barn, and perhaps discover a back-door by which she could let Tommy out.

The fence was a hard one to get over; but as Linda could climb like a squirrel, she did not give the difficulties of the fence a second thought. Neither did she fear anything behind her. Having reached the end of the garden without being disturbed, she considered herself safe, and her only anxiety was about the old man in the other yard.

But as she clutched the top of the fence with the tips of her fingers, and began to draw one foot above the other, she heard a sound which made her feet go up with astonishing swiftness; and before she stopped to think, she had thrown herself over the fence, and was crouching behind it on Mr. Mitchell's side.

She was no sooner over than she wished herself back, for she thought she would much rather face the little dog which had come barking at her than Mr. Mitchell; and she was sure that Mr. Mitchell must have looked up when the dog began to bark, and seen her flying over the fence. She peeped at him around the currant-bush which hid her. He was going back and forth, with his head bent over the saw, and apparently heard nothing but the scraping of the little sharp teeth in the wood, and saw nothing but the stick he was cutting in two.

Linda drew her skirts closely around her, and arranged herself between the two foes so that she could

watch both; but at last she decided that the dog had no other intention than to stand there and bark, and that Mr. Mitchell could not have seen her.

Then she began to long to escape and set Tommy free; but she did not quite dare, as Mr. Mitchell glanced up occasionally towards the barking, and might happen to glance at her just as she came forth. Just then her attention was called to Tommy in an unexpected manner.

A corn-cob came flying through the air and landed at her feet. She looked toward Mr. Mitchell, but could not believe he had thrown it, as he was still sawing, and was too far away to have aimed so surely. She could see no one else in either garden, but suddenly thought of Tommy, and looked towards the barn.

There was his face at a very high small window—a window not any too large to fit his chubby cheeks like a picture-frame. He had none of the sadness in his expression which one would expect from a guilty prisoner, but looked extremely cheerful, and shook his head in silent laughter as he pointed first at the dog, then at Linda. Afterwards he pointed down at the barn-door, and beckoned Linda to come and let him out.

Linda nodded her willingness to release him, but also pointed at the dog, and tried to make Tommy understand by signs why she was afraid to leave her hiding-place.

Tommy disappeared, and when he came back another corn-cob flew through the air; but it was meant for the dog, not Linda. It was not an easy matter, however, to hit a small dog who was protected by a high fence and several trees; and Linda interpreted Tommy's action as a hint, which she was not slow to take. She collected all the stones within reach, and began throwing them over the fence, with the intention of driving the dog away.

It was very provoking to see the result of her efforts; the dog became so angry that his barks were like shrieks, and came faster than ever, while Mr. Mitchell laid down his saw and looked towards Linda's bush as if he were surely coming to inquire about the noise; and Tommy—Tommy, for whom Linda had done and suffered so much—just laughed at her from his little window till Linda was half inclined to turn against him.

At least she could do nothing for him at present; she could think only of her own predicament. How could she escape if Mr. Mitchell should come? What should she say to him? Oh, that horrible little dog, he was actually beginning again, louder than before! Was there anything that could tire him or stop him?

Yes, there was one thing, and it came down the garden path in the hand of our angry-looking maid just at the moment of Linda's greatest despair. For one second Linda did not feel quite certain whether

the maid was bringing the switch to beat her or the dog. But the dog knew better and scampered away before the switch could fall on his back.

The servant looked around as if she wondered what was the cause of so much barking and seemed searching for the bold child who had walked uninvited through a stranger's garden. But although she glanced among trees and bushes she did not peep through the hole in the fence; and at last she went away.

Then Linda could give her attention to Mr. Mitchell; and what was her dismay to discover that he had advanced a long way from the woodpile towards her bush. But he was standing still, and as the dog did not return to annoy him he concluded to walk back and take up his saw. Then Linda felt as if her troubles were over, and glanced towards Tommy.

He knew better than to laugh now. He shook his head quite sadly and pointed towards the door and beckoned Linda to hurry. Filled with pity for his woes now that he had stopped laughing at her, Linda jumped up and ran behind the barn. She had only to pull out a small piece of wood which was fastened to the barn by a string, and which served as a bolt, when the door flew open.

CHAPTER IV.

"WALK in," said Tommy politely, for he had slid-den down from the top of his haystack to meet her.

"I'm glad to get out of the sun," said Linda.

"Pretty warm out doors?" said Tommy.

"Roasting," said Linda.

"I don't know much about out doors, you see," said Tommy. "I'm a prisoner. But it's nice and cool in here."

"I believe you've had a good time," said Linda; "you always do have a good time."

"There's a lot of fun in a barn," said Tommy.

"All the trouble comes on me," said Linda. "Whenever you are bad I get the worst of it."

"I'm not bad," said Tommy sweetly.

"It's wicked to kill," said Linda.

"Take a seat on my sofa," said Tommy. "You must be tired jumping fences and everything."

Linda sank down on the hay.

"Have a fan?" said Tommy, offering his hat. "Do n't be mad. You ought to have taken better care of me any way, Linda Barto."

"You ungrateful little thing! That's what you always say," said Linda. "And I nearly kill myself

taking care of you. I've been racing through the sun this hot day, and nearly scared to death by an old man and a dog and a woman with a stick ; and it made me feel so badly when I saw that poor little white chicken you killed. It's dreadfully wicked to kill, Tommy Barto."

"I only fired a little stone at him," said Tommy.

"But you know you can hit anything you aim at," said Linda, "if you are but seven years old. It's a very dangerous gift to be able to take good aim, and you might kill me some day. You know there was once a great big giant killed with a little bit of a stone. I'm glad Mr. Mitchell has broken your sling all to pieces."

"I've got ten cents in my bank ; I can get another ; and I don't see what you want to be so cross for. We'd better hurry out before Mr. Mitchell catches us. Didn't I kick though when he caught me ! He came creeping around the wood-pile just like a mouse, and before I even heard him, he had me. I suppose he was watching."

"Well, Tommy, I hope this is an end of your sling mischief," said Linda. "I am sure we have all suffered enough."

"I had a good enough time till you came," said Tommy. "I played all over the hay and found an egg, and cut T. B. up on that beam so Mr. Mitchell would have something to remember me by. Every

time he looks that way he 'll think of Tommy Barto. Lucky I had my knife in my pocket, was n't it?"

"I suppose mamma knew you would n't suffer much when she decided to let Mr. Mitchell do what he pleased with you. But I determined to let you out," said Linda, feeling as if she had done a great deal for nothing, and longing for some word of appreciation from Tommy for all she had suffered.

"You have n't let me out yet," said Tommy. "How are you going to get me home without his seeing me?"

"O dear," said Linda, "I never thought of that. Can you climb the fence, Tommy?"

Tommy shook his head. "It's too high. I'm not as long as you, you know. Besides there is the dog."

"And the woman with a stick," said Linda.

"Well, what 'll you do?" said Tommy. "You better hurry, or Mr. Mitchell will come and let me out himself. Time must be almost up."

"If he should find me here he would n't let either of us out, I believe," said Linda.

"He would n't let you out anyway," said Tommy, "'cause you had n't any business to come in his barn without being asked."

"Listen!" said Linda, suddenly starting up from her cushion of hay.

The sound was very near, and very like the tread of feet.

"Come!" said Linda, seizing Tommy's hand.

"Where?" said Tommy. "What you going to do?"

But Linda did not stop to answer. She pulled him along, and before Tommy could say a word they were flying over Mr. Mitchell's lawn.

It was only a cat whose steps they had heard behind the barn, for there stood Mr. Mitchell still sawing. He looked up in amazement as the children raced by him, but he had not time to lay down his saw when the four feet were out of the gate and kicking up a great dust in the middle of the street.

"There!" said Linda, as they stood still at last inside their own gate, "you are safe."

"For this time," said Tommy coolly. "I wonder what you'll be doing for me next."

"Leaving you to yourself perhaps," said Linda. "You do n't know how soon I may get tired of taking care of you."

"Oh if you took care of me all the time I would n't get locked up in people's barns and everything," said Tommy.

"I never saw such an ungrateful child," said Linda. "I'm going right away, and you can do whatever you please."

What Tommy pleased to do after Linda had gone into the house was to sit down and consider whether he was ungrateful. Linda had told him so several times that afternoon, and when he thought of all she

had done for him and how few thanks she had received, he did not know but there might be some truth in her accusation.

He began to feel a little ashamed the more he thought of Linda and himself; and although he had laughed a great deal when he saw her flying over the fence, with her flushed cheeks and wild hair, yet Tommy did not laugh about it all now; and instead of thinking of her funny plight he could not help thinking how much better a sister he had than Teddy Symonds. Teddy was always telling him how his sister Belle scolded when he got into mischief. "You deserve to suffer the consequences, Teddy Symonds, and you may for all of me," Belle used to say. But Linda never said that to Tommy. No matter how much he deserved to suffer she always pitied him and helped to make the consequences as easy as possible.

Tommy's hand had gone into his pocket and taken out his knife when he began to think. He always seemed to think better with the knife in his hand. Indeed, he felt as if he could do everything better with that knife in sight. It was a great friend of Tommy's, and he felt lost when it went out of his sight occasionally.

Polly and baby had a way of hiding and losing it whenever they could get a chance. If by any accident Tommy left it lying around, one of those children was sure to see it, and that was the end of it till Linda

found it. How many times Linda had left her reading or her day-dreaming to run from room to room, up stairs and down stairs, to hunt behind and under things, to question and coax the children, and never to give up until she found Tommy's treasure.

"It is no more than fair," thought Tommy, as he tossed the knife in the air and proceeded with the game of mumble-de-peg that he was playing—"it is no more than fair you should make her something to pay for her finding you so often. Besides, I owe her something for getting me out of jail this afternoon. Can't exactly go and thank her now, and tell her I wasn't very grateful, but if I give her a nice present she'll know what it means. So, old knife, you can just help me out and make her something pretty."

Tommy walked around to the woodhouse, and came back with a pine stick. He chose a shady place and stretched his legs on the grass, and began to whistle and think.

"Guess I'll make her a parasol," he said, "a parasol for her doll."

As he whistled and whittled he kept thinking, and it gave Tommy much pleasure to consider what a good boy he was.

"I could run away if I wanted to," thought he. "Linda's gone off and forgotten to look after me, the way she's always doing, and there is nobody around. I could run two miles, and none of the family would

see me. But I wont. I'll just stay here and work hard for my sister."

Good little Tommy smiled in self-approval; but while thinking so much of himself he thought too little of the dangerous weapon he was using, and the first thing he knew out spirted some drops of blood from a cut in his thumb.

He wiped them off, but out came more, and as fast as he wiped, more bubbled up from the cut. So he twisted his handkerchief tightly around the thumb; but that made a very clumsy thumb to hold a knife with. He was wondering what he should do, when he heard a voice calling,

"I'll get a little rag and come out, Tommy."

He looked up and could not see Linda; but as the voice came from behind a bedroom blind, he knew she must be there.

"She did n't forget me, after all," thought Tommy. "Never saw such a girl. She must have been watching me all this time to see nothing happened to me. I'll make her a beauty of a parasol."

And after Linda had bound the thumb up neatly, Tommy worked diligently till he had a flat piece of wood with a hole in it, and a stick that fitted the hole. After fitting the handle in, he considered the parasol a success.

He was carrying it in to Linda, when he met her coming out with her hat on.

"I'm going to get Polly," she said; "and mamma says you can go in and stay with her or come with me."

"I'll go with you," said Tommy, as he held out the parasol and prepared to present it. "Linda!"

"Well," said Linda. "What is it, dear?"

"Linda, here's a present," said Tommy. "I thought I'd like to make you something, you know."

He expected her to understand why he wished to make her something, which she did in a moment, without need of further explanation.

"Oh yes, darling. Thank you. That's a good little boy," said Linda. "Did you make the pretty little footstool all yourself?"

"It is n't a footstool, you know," said Tommy.

"Oh, a piano-stool, of course," said Linda.

"No, it is n't," said Tommy.

"Why, it is a toad-stool, dear," said Linda, "like those that grow down by Mr. Mitchell's. How stupid I am!"

"It is n't any kind of a stool," said Tommy gloomily.

"Oh, a cunning little table for my doll," said Linda. "Thank you a thousand times."

"It is a parasol!" roared Tommy. "Should think you might know a parasol when you see it. I never saw anything like a girl."

"I am a stupid girl," said Linda, holding the para-

sol up toward the sun, and prancing along under the little toy. "But now that I know what it is, I don't see how I ever could have thought it was anything else. Come on, Tommy. It is time for Polly to get home."

They did not hurry very much, however, for Linda amused Tommy all the way to the Symonds' by walking like all the different people she had ever seen under a parasol. She pranced and minced, and flirted her skirts and hobbled, and then played she was an old woman caught out in a storm, and that her parasol was a big umbrella, until Tommy was delighted to see in what a variety of amusing ways his toy could be used.

"My doll shall take a walk under it when we get home," said Linda, "and I will tell her it is a present from her uncle Tommy. There's Polly with her things on, Tommy. She must have got tired of waiting for me. It looks as if she was coming home."

By the time they reached the Symonds' gate Polly flirted out of it.

"Bound for home, Poll?" said Tommy.

"Yes, I am," said Polly. "I'm glad that Belle Symonds isn't my sister. I wouldn't have her. She made us pick up our things."

"Well, dear, little girls ought to pick up their things," said Linda.

"It spoils all the fun," said Polly, "to go pick up

your things when you get through playing. I'd rather not play. Bessie told her you always picked up for us when she came to play at my house; and she said Linda could, if she pleased, but she wouldn't. Mean old thing!"

"Never mind, Polly," said Linda. "Bessie can come and play to-morrow, and I'll pick up."

"O Linda," said Polly, "guess what I got for you—something lovely."

"For me?" said Linda. "How rich I'll be. Tommy has just made this parasol for my doll."

"Mine begins with a f," said Polly.

"Sugar-plum?" guessed Tommy.

"No," Polly answered innocently, for she had no more idea that sugar-plum did not begin with f than that Polly did not begin with g.

"Gold ring?"

"No."

"Candy?" said Linda.

"No; the first word of it is pop."

"Oh, pop-corn," said Tommy.

"There's more," said Polly. "Guess right and I'll give it to you, Linda."

"Pop-corn ball," said Linda. "I might have known what it was if I'd only happened to look down at your fat little pocket."

The contents of the pocket immediately came forth, while Polly said,

"You remember that little vase of yours I broke, Linda?"

"Yes," said Linda, feeling rather guilty as she thought how angry she had been when the accident occurred.

"This is to make up," said Polly.

"Oh, thank you, darling," said Linda, "and if Tommy will lend me his knife I'll divide it in three parts."

"That knife always serves a good turn," said Tommy, quickly giving it to Linda.

Then they all sat down on the grass while Linda made a just division of the ball.

"What kind little children you are to-day," she said, looking up in the air; and while Tommy and Polly ate and chattered on each side of her, she nibbled the pop-corn slowly and thought.

Tommy was not sorry for his ingratitude every day; Polly did not always give her something to make up for the mischief she had done. This was a white day, thought Linda, and began to consider why; for Linda always liked to know the reasons of things, and was very much given to inquiry into the causes of unusual events.

They had both told her that she was a great deal nicer than Belle Symonds; but Linda could remember days when they had told her she was just like Belle, so the difference must be in herself; and oh, how glad she

was to think that she had been a kinder and more patient sister to-day than yesterday. To be sure, she had not been perfect, but she had improved, and the reason she rejoiced so over the improvement was because she had begun the day with a brave resolve.

Things had been going wrong for several days. She had longed to read and study, longed for opportunities to write out her thoughts, and had been kept particularly busy by mamma and the children. She had grown impatient; she had thought of all the little girls who had plenty of time to do what they pleased, had become discontented and then cross, and the consequence was that during the last week she had had several quarrels with Tommy and Polly.

It always made her heart ache when she lay in the dark before going to sleep to think of those quarrels, and she could quite understand why people had been commanded not to let the sun go down upon their wrath. There were no sweet dreams and deep repose for Linda in the nights that followed quarrelsome days.

The sun had gone down upon her wrath the night before, and she had waked with a heavy heart that morning. But when she went to her little "Dew-drops" to learn her daily verse, it seemed as if a voice spoke to her, for the verse said, "Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."

"If you and Polly and Tommy are to love as brethren, and have no quarrels to-day, you will have to be

pitiful and courteous to each other, Linda. That is the only way," the voice seemed to say.

A great desire came into Linda's heart to have a peaceful, happy day, a desire stronger than the longing she felt for reading and dreaming; and it was accompanied by a determination. But, oh, she knew so well how weak her strongest determinations were, that she kneeled down and prayed that she might be pitiful and courteous, so that she and Polly and Tommy might love as brethren all day.

Now more than one impatient word had escaped her lips since morning, but many a courteous one had followed to take the sting away from it; more than once she had felt more inclined to be just than pitiful with the children, but, after all, pity had prevailed.

So Linda knew why the day was ending so pleasantly, and she thanked her heavenly Father that the verse for the 20th of August happened to be one that she especially needed, and that he had answered her prayers by helping her to be more pitiful and courteous to-day.

Polly and Tommy could not imagine why she smiled, nor why her lips moved silently; but they were so accustomed to her queer ways that they asked no questions.

Only Polly knocked her elbow, and said,

"Will you lend me your little parasol to take my dolly walking to-morrow, Linda?"

"Yes," said Linda.

"Show her how you can walk with it," said Tommy.

So Linda entertained Polly on the way home as she had entertained Tommy on the way to the Symonds', and they all reached their own gate in great glee.

Mamma was standing in the door with the baby, and Linda ran up to her to show her Tommy's parasol and to tell her also about Polly's gift.

"They are great bothers sometimes," said mamma. "They worry you and tease you and tire you out; but how they love you, Linda!"

"As brethren," said Linda; and mamma, who was also accustomed to her odd ways, asked no explanation of the words she did not understand, but let Linda walk away, with the dreamy look in her eyes, to muse a little further on the Christian graces of pity and courtesy.

CHAPTER V.

IT was the time of year when everybody was beginning to think of school. The children who liked work better than play were glad to get out their books and prepare for the coming days; so were the children who loved play, and had had so much of it during the long summer vacation that they were ready for a change. There were many more of these than of the others; but there were also children who liked all play and no work, and would have been glad to have the vacation last for ever. Belle Symonds was one of them, and she poured out her grief to Linda, who listened and marvelled.

How a little girl could be sorry to go to school Linda could not understand. She might have poured a different story into Belle's ears. She might have told her what a grief it was to her that she had neither school-terms nor vacations all the year round, but sometimes a little study and sometimes a little play, just as it happened, with always plenty of work and care at home.

Linda did not tell Belle those griefs; but she thought how queerly things went in this world, and it seemed strange to her that the little girls who longed

for school must stay at home, while the little girls who hated it must go.

She had flitted in and out of schoolrooms—there a few weeks and at home a few weeks, until it always ended in her staying at home altogether. Once when she had got nicely started in the studies of the year, Tommy took the measles, and was ill so long that Linda had to leave her books and assist in the nursing. Polly took them, and the baby, and by the time they were all well mamma was worn out and needed Linda.

Another time they went through just the same experience with whooping-cough; and there were various smaller experiences, such as guests, her mamma's headaches, the children's toothaches and accidents—indeed there seemed no end to the cases of urgent need which called Linda from school and kept her out.

All the while her papa kept losing money; they were hard times for everybody, but seemed much harder for him than for other men. Linda wondered why the hardest of the hard times seemed to fall upon her papa; how it happened that among all her little friends she was the only one who could have no new dresses, the only one who must stay at home and fill the place of nursery-maid.

For that was how it ended. They could not afford to keep their nurse any longer, and during the whole summer Linda had been helping to fill her place. Now

when September came she was not even to attempt going to school. It was quite decided that whether the children were ill or well, Linda was needed at home.

She was glad to bear her share of the burden that had fallen upon the family; and when she saw how busy her mamma was all the time, and how cheerfully she made over old clothes for herself and the children, and did all the housework that the nurse used to do; and when she heard her papa whistling and laughing as gayly as ever, though she knew his heart was heavy, then Linda felt ashamed to murmur, and determined not to care because she could not have her own way.

But, after all, she was only eleven years old, and though she considered herself one of the elder members of the family, and was admitted to mamma's and papa's councils, and allowed to share their burdens, yet she was only four years older than Tommy, who seemed such a little child. So it is not surprising that she sometimes looked upon things through a child's eyes, and that after leaving Belle Symonds one afternoon she thought deeply and sadly upon the strange tangle of events about her.

There was Belle who hated school. Her papa had complained of the hard times, but it made no difference with his children. They had as many new clothes as ever; they could go to school; and if Belle only loved to study, how happy she could be with her new

clothes and new books, pleasant friends about her ; and, best of all, every opportunity to find out the wonderful causes of living and growing things, and to read the lives and stories of those great people who had made their names famous for ever by their brave deeds.

Linda's ideas of school were quite different from Belle's. She saw all the romance, Belle all the reality. Linda had never stayed in school long enough to learn that there was more prose than poetry about it; and thought that she should receive there only a fuller and more satisfactory education than at home, but of the very same kind.

At home she dipped into books as a bee dips into flowers, gathering honey from those she liked best. Here she found a story about some great man, which pleased her so well that she always remembered the man for the sake of the story; now she discovered what went on under the waves, or down in the heart of the earth; how the creatures of the air lived, and how the worlds went rolling around each other far off in the sky, and looked like little shining stars to the people millions of miles away.

But while Linda was educating herself so delightfully, and dreaming of school as something much more delightful, Belle was counting long lines of hateful figures, learning the meanings of words she cared nothing about, hunting on maps for places which she never expected to visit, and which she was always getting con-

fused with other places and other maps, learning more dates in her little history than stories, and hardly knowing that there were wonders in the sea and sky.

So it is not strange that the two little girls misunderstood each other, and that as they parted at the corner and went their different ways each envied the other and thought that the world was rather upside down.

It was decided that each of the Barto children should have a few lessons with their mamma every day, and on the first of September they began. Polly took her primer and sat down in the corner. Tommy looked exceedingly miserable, with his eyes roaming from his First Reader to the window, and his thumb rolling the corners of the leaves; and Linda, with a book in one hand and the baby in the other, was trying to learn a grammar-lesson, which she hoped to have an opportunity of reciting some time during the day when she and mamma could get away from the children long enough.

But school did not go off very well. There were constant interruptions. When the grocer's cart came, Polly dropped her book and ran to the kitchen to see if the boy had brought her a promised bunch of raisins; and when the butcher drove around to the back-door, Tommy had to go and speak to him, as they were very particular friends. Then the baby wanted to go to school, too, and pretended to read out of Pol-

ly's primer, which threw her into a fit of laughing that quite unfitted her for study. And every time mamma went out of the room both Polly and Tommy wanted to follow; or, if they could be persuaded to stay, would do nothing but chatter and play till she came back.

So it went on for several days, till mamma and Linda began to feel discouraged; and one evening, after the front-door slammed and mamma came up to have a little talk, Linda thought of something.

"We ought to have a real schoolroom away off by itself," she said, "where Polly and Tommy could n't be always looking out of the window, and where baby could n't come. I think they would study, mamma, if they did n't have so many other things to think about besides their books."

"But I cannot take them off by themselves," said mamma. "Now that I have to be nursery-maid and waitress and seamstress all in one, I cannot give up other things long enough to be nothing but a teacher."

"I can teach them," said Linda. "I can take them into the nursery every morning, and keep them there till they have read and spelled. While they are studying I can be studying too. There are not any windows except those that look out into the back-yard. I have thought it all out, mamma, and I think it would be nice to try it to-morrow."

Linda's little school in the nursery succeeded so

well the first day, that on the second day Polly and Tommy ran up stairs with their books, as the clock struck nine, without any coaxing. They had enjoyed their new teacher very much the day before, for she praised them for good lessons and rewarded them by a delightful story when they were through.

After that Linda taught from nine till ten every morning; but as the novelty wore off her work became harder. She not only had to hear Polly and Tommy recite their lessons, but she had to help them learn them; she had to keep their attention off from the few objects of interest to be seen from the back windows, to coax them not to run to the door every time there was a sound in the hall, for sometimes a footstep would excite them as much as if they heard a band or a hand-organ; she had to struggle continually against their indifference to their education. Polly sometimes took a little real interest in her primer and the other branches of knowledge which Linda tried to impart; but Tommy declared that he would just as soon be a man that couldn't read and write as not. He didn't care how much two and two made, he said. He would just as soon it would be nine as four. It was nothing to him whether the world was round or flat, or whether it moved or stood still; he just wished they'd let him alone, and not bother him with such stuff. If they'd let him go round where he pleased, with his knife in his pocket, that was all he'd ask of anybody.

Linda had all Tommy's objections to an education to meet and answer every morning. Over and over she tried to persuade him that it was not desirable to grow up a dunce, and to coax him at least to learn his lessons to please her, if not for his own good.

She found that she could not study and teach at the same time; and although her school lasted only one hour, she was so tired after it that she did not feel like learning her own lessons immediately; and as soon as she was ready to study, the baby was very apt to want her, or perhaps Polly had cut her finger, or Tommy had run away, or her mamma must send her on an errand; so that Linda's education progressed under difficulties, for often after she had managed to learn her lessons, it was quite impossible to get away with mamma long enough to recite them.

Often, when she saw Belle Symonds passing the house with her books under her arm, she thought of herself with shame as belonging to the uneducated ranks who make no progress in knowledge day by day. She did not know that, with all her disadvantages, she was progressing more rapidly than Belle, and that a desire to learn is a greater blessing than the most favorable opportunities without that desire; for what people wish to know, they generally will know by some means or other. Although Linda's recitations to mamma became more irregular all the time, and were often omitted altogether, yet she gleaned little lessons from books

every day of her life, and was acquiring a good deal of general information, while Belle was groaning over dates and figures. But mamma noticed that Linda was becoming rather melancholy under the weight of her new burdens—that her tendency to see the dark side of things was increasing; and like the kind and loving mamma that she was, she thought Linda's troubles over and over until she began to see a way out of them, although it was a way that would be far from pleasant for herself.

CHAPTER VI.

ONE night when Linda was going to bed the moon looked in at her window with such a great, round, bright face, that Linda leaned her elbows on the sill and looked back at her as if she were a guest who must be entertained. The moon seemed such a real, live thing that Linda felt as if there were two people sending glances at each other from earth and sky; and the longer she gazed the more the feeling grew upon her, until she began to talk to her companion.

She had not talked in rhyme for a long while. Her school had had a very prosaic effect upon her. She had no opportunity to dream from nine to ten, as Polly and Tommy demanded her closest attention, and that one very practical hour had seemed to cast its shadow over all the hours of the day and interfere with her dreams and poetry even in idle moments. But to-night she was unusually discouraged, and her thoughts were full of herself, so that the influence of the moon was all that was needed to make her gloomy fancies flow into words. She ran for pencil and paper, and laying the paper on the window-sill, wrote by the light which streamed down from the sky:

“Oh, I’d like to be a moon,
 Or a star,
Because then I could travel
 Afar,

“And see everything
 Down below,
And learn all that I
 Long to know !

“Oh, I wish I could read
 All the day !
Oh, how I hate work
 And love play !

“I have to teach and toil
 Like a slave.
Oh, why cannot people have
 What they crave ?”

After putting such thoughts into words they had a still greater influence over her, and she went to bed feeling very discontented, and wondering and wondering why people could not have what they wanted, and why one person had so much more than another.

She awoke in the same mood, and went into the schoolroom poorly prepared for Polly and Tommy.

Tommy was lying over a footstool, with his hands and feet dashing wildly about in the air.

“I’m a sea-lion,” he said. “Get out of my way, Linda. I’m going to swim over that way. Clear the road !”

As the stool had castors which moved easily, Tom-

my's violent motions made it go wherever he pleased, and before Linda could escape he had nearly knocked her over.

"Don't be rude," said Linda.

"Don't be cross," said Tommy.

Linda heeded the warning, and said pleasantly,

"I'm glad you have n't forgotten about the sea-lion, Tommy. Do you remember all I told you in school yesterday?"

Tommy replied by opening his mouth and letting out a tremendous roar as he swam towards her again.

Linda put her fingers in her ears, but she could not complain that Tommy had forgotten where the sea-lion got its name.

"But they are very peaceable animals, Tommy," she said, as he whirled his stool about and began to pursue Polly, with an expression as fierce as his roar.

"When they 're let alone they are," said Tommy; "but if you bother them, you know, they wont stand it. That's what you told us. Polly stole my slate-pencil and broke it in forty pieces, and this lion's mad."

He struck against his little sister so violently as to knock her over, and while Linda picked her up and tried to soothe her, she said,

"I only wish you would remember all your lessons as well as you did that one, Tommy. I never knew you learn a lesson as well."

"That is because it's interesting," said Tommy.

"If you'd make them all interesting I'd learn them for you."

"You always talk as if you were doing me a great favor to come to school," said Linda, tossing her head. "I think it is the other way. I don't think every sister would bother to teach little children that won't be good and don't like to learn."

"Belle Symonds would n't," said Tommy. "But I'm not Belle, you know. I'm better than Belle Symonds any day." And Tommy tossed up his head in imitation of Linda.

"I didn't say so," said Linda. "But I'd like to change places with her and have a good time for a little while."

Polly began to pout and Tommy to whistle a saucy air. Neither of them knew exactly why, but there was something the matter. They felt uncomfortable, and the morning had begun badly.

Linda rang her little bell. Polly flounced into her seat, and Tommy stamped across the room to his.

"Don't make such a noise," said Linda.

"Do n't! do n't! do n't!" said Tommy. "This is one of the days when Linda begins everything she says with do n't."

Linda rang a second bell and Polly and Tommy opened their books.

Linda felt more tired than she often did at the close of school, and the children looked as cross as if they

had been confined for an hour. She wondered what was the matter with them this morning, but underneath that wonder was another which would have explained everything. Over and over those foolish words, "Oh, why cannot people have what they crave?" kept repeating themselves in Linda's mind. She wondered why and wondered why, until she could hardly give her attention to the lessons. It was her own discontent which made the children discontented this morning. Her mood was always theirs, and if she had not kept wondering about her own troubles she would have had no occasion to wonder about their crossness. She thought her foolish rhymes were poetry, and enjoyed saying them over and making herself gloomy.

"Linda's dreaming," said Polly to Tommy, in a loud whisper.

"I'm a martyr. See me burn!" replied Tommy, in another great whisper.

Tommy's remarks always had an effect upon Linda, and although she pretended not to hear the whispers, the martyr-like expression of her face changed very quickly, and she called Polly over to recite her lesson in a moment. Polly did not know it, so Linda sat down by her and pronounced the hard words and helped her learn them. There was no more dreaming until she had disposed of Polly; but when she came to Tommy he was so determined to look out of the window and pay no attention whatever to anything

she was saying that she felt tempted to leave him to his lazy mood and be lazy also.

So Linda stopped repeating the words of Tommy's spelling lesson and urging him to repeat them after her. She dropped her elbows on his desk, her face into her hands and followed Tommy's gaze which was wandering through the window-pane away off toward the top of a tall barn.

But Tommy was as particular about having Linda pay strict attention to her business as if he had paid her a large salary for doing so. He might be an inattentive scholar, but it was not at all proper that she should be an inattentive teacher.

When he saw that she was looking at the barn he looked away from it.

"Why do n't you teach me?" said he.

"Because you wont learn," said Linda, still gazing at the barn, and then following the flight of a bird which went up from the roof, up and up and out of sight.

She wondered where it had gone. She wondered if there was a place on any of those blue and white clouds, which looked as light as snowflakes, which was strong enough to bear the weight of a bird if it should wish to fold its wings and rest for a while. She wondered where birds did rest anyway after they had travelled miles beyond the tree-tops. She wondered if they fell down and broke their wings and

came bruised and bleeding to earth. Oh, she hoped not!

"What are you sighing about?" said Tommy.
"Here, come out of the clouds and teach me. Teachers do n't dream till school's out."

"I wont teach you unless you learn," said Linda.

"I told you I'd learn if you made it interesting," said Tommy. "It's your business to make it interesting."

Linda's eyes had not moved from the clouds, but she was thinking now, not of the bird which had just disappeared among them, but of the bright things which she saw up there last night; and as Tommy demanded that she should be interesting she remembered something to tell him about the stars.

"Oh, it is lovely!" she said, turning towards him with a sudden smile.

"What, my nose?" said Tommy. "That's what you're looking at."

"But that is n't what I'm thinking of," said Linda. "I'm thinking of something interesting I can tell you, Tommy. It is so beautiful that I am sure you can never forget it."

"Well, let's have it," said Tommy indifferently.

"Learn your spelling first, dear," said Linda.

"Well, can't you make spelling interesting too?" said Tommy.

"I'm afraid not very," Linda answered hopelessly.

"I've tried so many times, and you won't like it whatever I say and do, Tommy. The only way is to learn it and get through with it; and think how glad you'll be when it's all over."

"Oh, that's easy to say when it isn't over," said Tommy, flinging his hands into his hair, and looking down with a scowl at the spelling-book.

"O Tommy!" said Linda, clapping her hands.

"Well, what now?" said Tommy.

"I thought it would be enough reward for learning your spelling if I told you something very interesting after it; but besides that I'll give you a prize, Tommy. A prize! Just think of it!"

"What kind?" said Tommy with a lazy groan, drumming a tune on his desk, and gazing away from the spelling-book to the barn.

Linda knew that his face would not look so dull and indifferent after her answer, and she enjoyed the bright intelligent expression which dawned upon Tommy's features as she said "My orange!"

It was an unusually large orange which her papa had brought her the night before as her wages for teaching his children, he said, and Tommy and Polly had cast longing glances upon it.

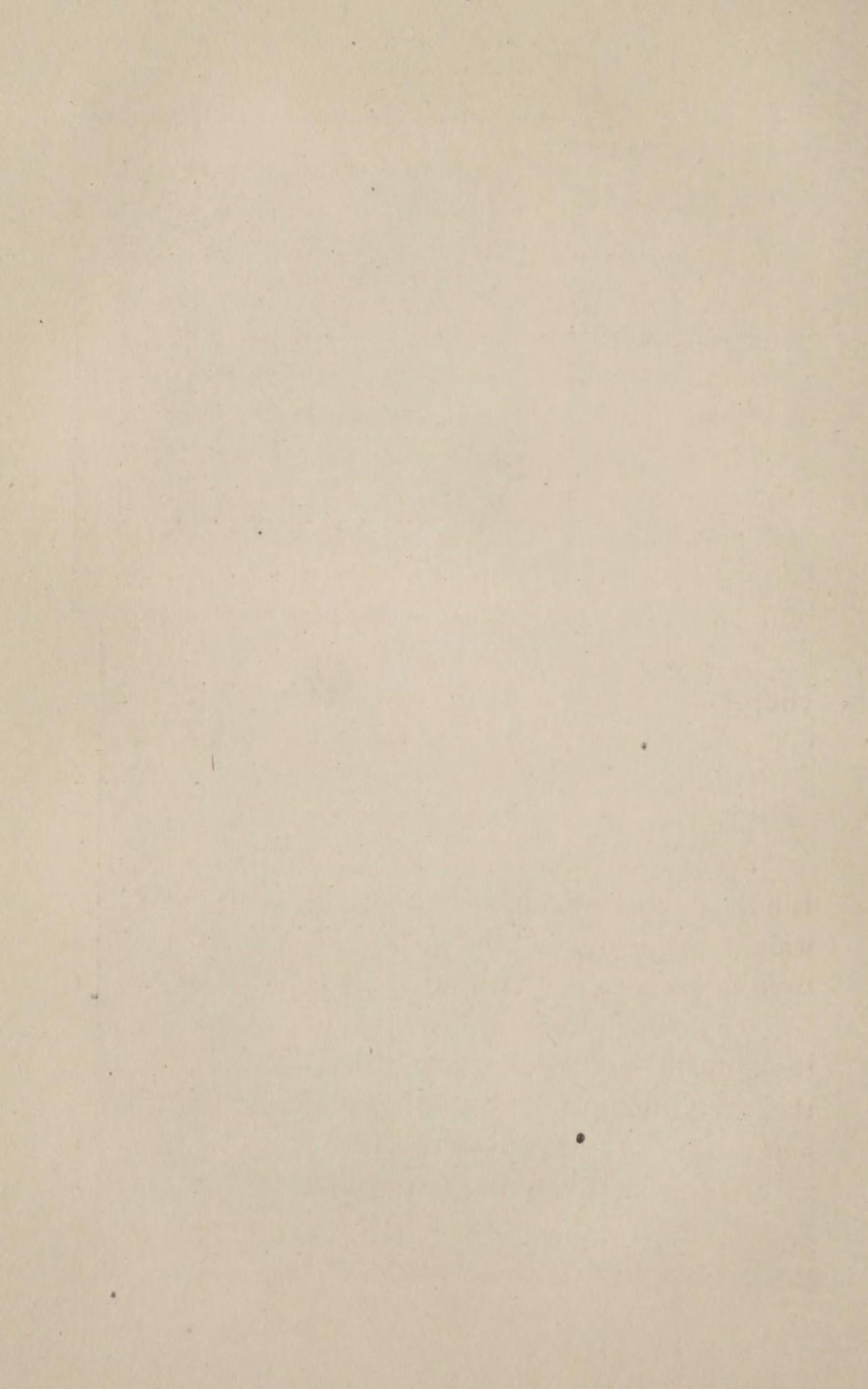
"I would n't want to take it away from you," said Tommy.

"But if you earn it I'll be glad to give it to you," said Linda. "Teachers always give prizes to help

children study, you know; and I never thought to do it before."

"All right," said Tommy, bending his head over his book; and he studied so hard that Linda felt almost provoked that what Tommy could do for a prize he would not do without. But she was trying to be patient; and she did not rebuke him. She only improved the opportunity to give all her attention to Polly.





CHAPTER VII.

POLLY sometimes rewarded Linda's efforts by taking an interest in what was told her and making intelligent remarks and asking helpful questions. But Polly had begun the morning wrong to-day. Linda's discontent had offended her, and when Linda sat down beside her she said,

"Do n't see why you do n't give me a prize too."

"O Polly, do n't bother me," said Linda. "Learn your lesson and stop talking about other things."

"I wont learn it without a prize," said Polly.

"I'll give you an apple," said Linda.

"Tommy's going to have an orange," said Polly.

"Well, I can't give you what I have n't got," said Linda, jumping up and walking away. "If you do n't want the apple you can go without anything. I'm tired of teaching such children."

"Oh, why cannot people have what they crave?" thought she, as she sat down in her own chair, across the room from Polly. "Why can't I have a little rest and peace?"

By this time Polly was at the window.

"I see an old hen," said Polly. "She is flapping her wings. I guess she's going to crow."

"Hens crow!" said Tommy, preparing to follow her to the window.

"Remember the prize!" said Linda sternly, and Tommy popped back into his seat.

Polly whirled around in the middle of the room and dropped down on the floor to make her skirts puff out like a balloon.

"Get out of my light," said Tommy, "and attend to your lessons."

Linda knew that Polly was naughty and trying to annoy her, so she turned over the leaves of a book and pretended not to notice her. She felt very angry. Everything was going wrong this morning.

Polly jumped away from Tommy towards the door, opened it a crack and said, "I'm going down stairs a minute."

"If you do, mamma 'll punish you," said Linda. "I shall tell her you had no permission."

"Cross-patch, draw the latch," said Polly.

"If you do n't behave better I wont teach you any more," said Linda.

"Wish you would n't," said Polly. "Guess I 'll go play with baby."

She knew, however, that she would be punished if she went down stairs without Linda's permission, and so paused on the doorsill, balancing herself on the toes of one foot and tipping almost over on her nose, now towards the hall, now towards the schoolroom, till

Tommy banged the covers of his spelling-book together, and shouted,

“I know it!”

By that time Polly seemed to have concluded that a poor prize was better than none, and walking back to her seat, said kindly,

“Well, Linda, I’ll take the apple.”

Linda felt tempted to tell her that it was too late now; but for the sake of peace let Polly go her own way. She jumped into her seat so hard that she shook Tommy’s slate off his desk.

“You are always breaking things,” said Tommy, running to pick it up, and finding a crack across it. “There are my slate and pencil both gone in one morning. Did you ever see such a smasher, Linda?”

“No,” said Linda. “I found five more teeth broken out of my comb this morning, Polly Barto. I forgot to speak of it before.”

“I wondered why you did n’t,” said Polly. “You’re so cross this morning I thought you’d be sure to say something about it.”

“She broke a handle off from a coffee-cup after breakfast, too,” said Tommy, still grumbling over his slate.

“You’re getting old enough to outgrow that dreadful habit of breaking everything you touch,” said Linda.

"I wont take your old apple, Linda Barto," said Polly, with a pout.

"Come, Tommy," said Linda.

While he recited his spelling Polly kept thinking of the apple till she wanted it very much.

"Well, I 'll take it, Linda," she said once more, and began to study very hard.

So there was peace for a while as Polly studied and Tommy recited. The diligent student and the perfect recitation cheered the little teacher's heart and put her into good humor for giving Tommy the interesting lesson she had promised.

"How beautifully you recited, Tommy," she said.
"If you would only study so hard every day."

"Oh, well, never mind about that now," said Tommy. "Give us that interesting lesson."

"When you look up in the sky at night, Tommy," Linda began.

"I do n't," said Tommy. "I go to bed. Catch me star-gazing."

"You do look at the stars sometimes," said Linda.
"Everybody does. If you 're going to interrupt me I can't tell you about it."

"Well, if you 're awfully interesting I 'll let you go on," said Tommy.

But Linda drummed upon the table a few minutes, and found it rather difficult to get into the right humor for her lesson again.

"When I look up into the sky at night, Linda," said Tommy in a coaxing way, giving her fingers an affectionate pat with the tips of his own.

"Then," said Linda, feeling her interest in her subject quite restored by that pat, "you see ever and ever so many stars moving all about the sky."

"They're always standing still when I look at them," said Tommy.

"I know you can't see them move," said Linda; "but if you look away and look back after a while you can see they have gone farther on. And every little star moves very fast all the time, Tommy; and it's only because you're so far away that they seem to be standing still. If you were near enough you could see them all running around the sky."

"Playing tag?" said Tommy.

"Well," said Linda, "I suppose it would look as if they were running about any way they pleased; but they are all moving in time, and going just where they are sent. They can't stop if they want to, and they can't go where they please at all; but one goes around another, and ever so many little ones go around a big one; and then the big one and little ones together all go around another big one, and so it keeps on till all the stars and suns and moons are moving round each other in time."

"It's like keeping step to a tune," said Tommy. "Does anybody play a fiddle to keep them on time?"

"Oh, now I am coming to the lovely part of it," said Linda. "Of course they don't have any music to move to, but in the old, old times people used to think they did, only they thought they played their own tune. Do you know what music is, Tommy?"

"Why, it's music," said Tommy. "Singing and playing on the piano and all that."

"It is nothing but sounds that keep time," said Linda. "That is music. And people used to think that when the stars moved against the air they made a noise."

"The way a bird's wings do, I suppose," said Tommy.

"Only a different sound," said Linda. "Well, of course all the sounds that all the stars made kept such good time that it was music, lovely music—the music of the spheres is what they called it. Whenever you hear people talking about the music of the spheres, you'll know what they mean by it, Tommy."

"I never hear anybody," said Tommy; "and if there isn't any music, what's the good of making so much talk about it? If somebody only thought so ever so long ago, that's nothing."

"Well," said Linda, "there was one man who said he heard it."

"Did he tell a lie?" said Tommy.

"He was a good man," said Linda, "and very great and wise, and he knew more about the stars than

any one who lived in the old times. No. I'm sure he didn't tell a lie. But he thought he heard it, if he didn't. His name was Pythagoras. I know he didn't tell a lie, Tommy. But perhaps he looked and looked at the stars till he dreamed the music."

"He ought not to be dreaming things that were n't true," said Tommy, who had always a rebuke ready for dreamers, "and I don't see what's the good of your telling me all that if it never happened."

"I love to think that the stars make music," said Linda dreamily, "and I wish I could hear what he thought he heard."

"You'll be thinking you hear it next," said Tommy contemptuously, "and it's nothing, after all. Give me my orange, Linda."

"I'll get it," said Linda, walking out of the room, quite discouraged. "Oh, why cannot people have what they crave?" she thought. "Why should stupid people like Tommy and Belle Symonds have all the advantages? Why can't I have a teacher to take pains with me as I take pains with him? It's all thrown away on him, but it would n't be on me. There's no use in bothering with Tommy any longer."

She did not feel at all inclined to give him the big orange which was the reward of yesterday's toil, and considered that sacrifice a part of the great trial she was undergoing. Surely everything was upside down

when she must give up her orange, earned at such a cost, to the little boy on whom her efforts had been wasted.

While she was out of the schoolroom she thought she had better run down and get Polly's apple, and as she came up the stairs with the big yellow orange in one hand and the little red apple in the other, a bright thought occurred to her. If Tommy could not understand how one small world went around a larger one, it was natural perhaps that he should not be much interested in the music they might make as they moved. She had heard of object-teaching, and here was a good opportunity for her to practise it. The little apple should represent our earth, the big orange the sun, and she would make Tommy understand it all by the plainest kind of teaching.

"O Tommy," said she, as she opened the schoolroom door, "I'll show you just how it is. Here's the big sun and here's the little earth. You see the stem of the apple. Well, suppose that goes all the way through it, and the apple turns around it, and while it's turning around on that it keeps going around the sun all the time, too. See, this is the way."

"It isn't a sun. It's my orange," said Tommy. "Don't be spoiling good things calling them such names."

"And it is n't an old earth; it's my nice little red apple," said Polly. "Please give it to me."

"I never saw such children," said Linda. "It is discouraging." She gave them each their prizes, and went through the rest of the morning without an attempt to make things interesting; and more than ever she wondered at their indifference to learning and at her lack of opportunities.

CHAPTER VIII.

As she came down stairs her mother noticed her sad face, and also the mischievous, defiant expression of Polly's, while Tommy looked sullen and gloomy.

"Did n't school go well to-day, dear?" she asked Linda.

"I never have had such a horrid time," said Linda.

"What was the trouble?" said mamma.

"Linda was cross," replied Polly and Tommy, almost in the same breath.

"Linda needs a vacation," said mamma quietly.

Perhaps it was that very gentleness that made Linda wonder about the answer to mamma's question. Were Polly and Tommy right? Was she cross? Was all the trouble in herself? Did it all come from her own discontent? And had those foolish rhymes, which she had thought so fine and had kept repeating, anything to do with it?

"After all, Linda," said mamma, "the day is only begun. You are very tired with that one hour of school, I can see; but there are ever so many hours left for you to get rested in, and I am not going to let you work any more to-day. You shall read or play, or do whatever you like, and these children are not to

trouble you at all. I will be nurse, and let my sewing go until to-morrow."

"O mamma, and will you play with us and everything, the way Linda does? What fun!" said Polly.

"I am afraid I shall not be as patient with you as Linda is," said mamma. "Come, run away, little woman, and get that cloud of care off your brow."

"I don't know what to do first," said Linda.

"I thought there were so many things you were always longing for time to do that you wouldn't have any difficulty in beginning," said mamma.

"I can always think of plenty of things when I can't do them," Linda said, laughing; "but then, of course, I'll read; I would always rather read than anything else."

"I don't want to interfere with any of your plans when the day is entirely your own, dear," said mamma; "but if I can help you to enjoy it better, I suppose you won't mind my making a suggestion, will you?"

"Oh, no, indeed," said Linda.

"I don't think that teacher's tired little brain is in just the condition to enjoy reading," said mamma, "and I am sure any book will be much more interesting after a little fresh air; so I advise you to put on your hat and get a breath of morning air the first thing you do. How would you like to go down to papa's office?"

"Oh, I'd love to go," said Linda.

"Let me go with her," said Polly.

"I want to go to the office too," said Tommy.

"No, Linda is going alone," said mamma. "She has had enough of children for one day. It always does you good to see papa, Linda. It's like sunshine, isn't it?"

"Yes, indeed," said Linda; "but he's generally so busy that you won't let me go to the office."

"I know it," said mamma; "but I think he will make time for you to-day."

Linda fancied that mamma spoke a little sadly, and she wondered why papa could make time for her to-day more than any other day.

"I am anxious to hear from the mail this morning," said mamma; "and you can ask papa if there are any letters, and then stay a few minutes if he invites you."

Linda rather missed Polly and Tommy after she had been out in the fresh air a few moments. She found her discontent and her dull headache blowing away in the morning breeze, and by the time she reached papa's office her heart was so full of sunshine that she hardly needed his to warm and cheer her.

However, she found papa's face as bright as ever; and the lines of thought and care which had been there the moment before she opened the door smoothed out into a smile as he said,

"Well, little woman."

"I've come for a letter," said she, as she jumped on his knee and gave him a kiss.

"How did you know there was a letter this morning?"

"I know mamma wanted one, so of course there ought to be one; and if you don't give it me I shall have to search your pockets."

But papa held her hands so tightly that his pockets were quite safe. Although Linda was agile and strong, she could not get her wrists out of his grasp; and finally, quite overcome with her efforts, she laid her head on his shoulder and sighed.

"Your cheeks look quite ruddy now," said papa. "Exercise improves your appearance, Linda. It would do you good to come down here and have a romp with me every morning."

"You wouldn't let me," said Linda. "Why do you let me stay this morning, papa? What made you lay down that pen and take me up instead of sending me off?"

Was it only a fancy, or did papa look sad too when she asked him that question? What did it all mean?

"Did you ever hear that blessings brighten as they take their flight?" said papa, pinching her cheek. "There, I have made it redder than it was before. I like to see you with red cheeks, Linda. I like to see you a healthy, happy little girl. I thought you were looking rather pale and dismal when I saw you early

this morning. What were you dreaming about? Were you trying to find an answer in dream-land to the question why people cannot have what they crave?"

If Linda's cheeks were red before, they were blazing now.

"You left your latest poem in plain sight on your bureau," said papa, "and I read it at half-past six this morning, when you were sound asleep."

Linda hung her head low and tried to hide her eyes from his.

"Polly had one of her breaking days yesterday," said papa cheerily, "and mamma wanted me to mend a chair before I came to the office; and as my little woman was not awake to trot up and down stairs hunting for my hammer, I had to hunt for it myself. That was what took me to your room. I didn't know but you might have been using it to pound some rhymes out of your brain. Or do they come without that? Is it easy to make poetry—eh, Linda?"

"Did you—find the hammer?" asked Linda in a smothered voice from papa's vest.

"Yes—I found it," said papa, imitating her tones. "Lift your head, baby. I promise not to tease you. Peek-a-boo!"

His laughing eyes, which would see hers, made her laugh too; but the face which he held between his hands and lifted to his was still blushing and ashamed.

"I promise not to tease you," said papa. "But as

long as you have asked that question, why people cannot have what they want in this life, may I conclude that you want an answer to it?"

"Yes," said Linda.

"And would you like to have me answer it?"

"Yes, papa," said Linda, wondering at his seriousness.

"I wont scold you for asking it," said papa, "for you have only done what all the world does. It is a very common question, little woman; but the older people get, the less they ask it. People have to travel a long way in life sometimes to find the very simple answer to that question."

"Have you found it?" said Linda.

"Well, Linda," said papa, "I find it and lose it, and find it again; but I succeed in keeping it most of the time. I at least know perfectly well what it is."

"What is it?" said Linda.

"The only reason we do not have what we want is because we do not want good enough things. We all have some One taking care of us who loves us better than we love ourselves; and if we do not wish for the best things, that wise love gives them to us in spite of our wishes. Then we think that, because we are not having our own way, we are being treated unkindly. How foolish and childish that seems; doesn't it, Linda?"

"Yes," said Linda.

"Then by-and-by there comes a day when we see things differently. Our eyes open wider, and the things that are really best for us seem better than those we wanted so much. But we do not expect little girls always to see wisely, especially as their papas and mammas often fail to do it. There will surely come a time to you, Linda, when you can understand why it was not best that all your wishes should be gratified. It may not come till you are a woman, or it may come while you are a little girl. But whether it comes early or late, there is only one thing for you to do while you are waiting for it."

"What is that?" said Linda.

"Trust the love that is taking care of you while you are waiting. Have faith in the wisdom that plans your life, and try and take the life just as it is, and make the best of it, whether you like it altogether or not. Then you will have found the true secret of happiness. Many people in this world only find the secret of a happy life as they are about to leave it. How sad it seems that they should not have found it in the beginning, and have had it to help them all along their way; does n't it?"

"Yes," said Linda; "but, papa, how can you help wondering why some people have things and others don't? How can you help thinking things are unfair?"

"If your heart is full of love for God, it will be im-

possible to think him unfair," said papa. "If you love him enough, you will trust him. You can only keep such thoughts as that you put in your rhyme out of your mind by first filling it with better thoughts. Suppose that, instead of allowing yourself to think in that fashion, you had gone to your Bible and found some such verse as, 'The trying of your faith worketh patience.' Don't you think it would have seemed easier to bear your trials if you had thought that God sent them to make the beautiful grace of patience grow? Or if you had found, 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,' don't you suppose the affliction would have seemed very light and the moment nothing compared to the glory they were bringing you? Then you should have read, 'He doth not afflict willingly;' and how sweet it would have been to think that it grieves him to give you pain, although he knows the joy that is coming after it, and that the pain itself is only for a moment. 'As many as I love I rebuke,' would have been a good verse to follow, and you could have gone to sleep resting in that love. If you had found no verse at all but 'God is love,' it would have been enough for you to rest in, Linda, and quite enough to have driven that evil thought out of your mind. You have learned the twenty-third psalm, haven't you?"

"Yes, papa."

"Well, I don't know but that is about the best thing for a little girl to say, after all. I think I will have you make me a promise."

"What is it?"

"I think I will ask you to promise that for the next three months, whenever gloomy, discontented thoughts come into your mind, or any troubles seem too great for you to bear, you will say, 'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.' Nothing can be more helpful and comforting to a little girl than the thought that she is a lamb in the good Shepherd's fold, and that he will guard her and keep her from all danger, and make her lie down in green pastures, and lead her beside still waters. For the next three months will you say that psalm when things go wrong, Linda?"

"Yes, papa; but why for three months?"

"I will tell you that some other time," said papa; "and here is the letter you were asking for."

Linda saw that it had been opened.

"I have read it," said papa. "It is from Aunt Bellinda."

"My aunt," said Linda.

"Yes, your aunt. She is very fond of you, she always says, and thinks we might spare you to her, when we have four children and she has none."

"You could n't spare me, could you, papa?"

"Not very easily," said papa. "'East or west, home is best.' That's a line of poetry I like. I don't

like much poetry, but that is a good line, I think, Linda. Now trot along home, and remember all I've said to you. I never said so much before in my life at a time, did I?"

"No, papa, I don't believe you ever did," said Linda. "It's lovely to stay in your office. I wish you'd always let me."

"This is an extra occasion," said papa. "By-by."

Why was it an extra occasion, Linda wondered; and why, she wondered, did mamma appear with traces of tears on her cheeks after reading Aunt Belinda's letter?

CHAPTER IX.

"HURRY up and get ready for our party, Linda," said Polly. "Tommy's been saving the orange till you got home."

"Me go too," screamed the baby.

"No," said Tommy, "mamma said you could n't come to the party and bother Linda."

After her walk in the fresh air and her talk with papa, Linda felt far from nervous, and was quite ashamed that the baby should be considered a bother to its sister. So she took it up in her arms, and said,

"You shall come, darling. Linda wants you."

"But this is your holiday, dear, and I am nurse," said mamma.

"Never mind," said Linda. "I will have time enough for reading by-and-by."

So they had a merry time in the schoolroom, which quite took away the memory of all the unpleasant occurrences of the morning, and Linda forgot that she had ever been a discouraged little schoolmistress as she ran into the library to do whatever she pleased all by herself.

She sat down in the window-seat. But instead of dreaming at once, she began to think of her talk with papa. It was so unusual for him to talk long and

gravely to her, that she wondered how it had happened this morning, and she also thought over everything he had said, making much of the words, as we do of whatever is rare.

What a beautiful thing, thought Linda, to discover the secret of happiness when one was a little child, and carry it in one's heart like a charm all through the years of life. Could it be that what was within one had more to do with happiness than what was without? She knew that a wrong mood made everything go wrong, and that when she was light-hearted she could overlook many little things that would annoy her at another time. The pleasant mornings in school were always the mornings when she woke determined to be patient and cheerful—not the mornings when she was wishing for all the things she could not have, and wondered why people must be denied the things they craved. Her cheeks burned when she thought of that poem papa had found on her bureau.

Yes, Linda's own little experience proved that the secret of happiness was to be found within one. Papa was right; and yet she did long to try the kind that comes from without. It seemed as if the things she wanted most must bring her the greatest joy. At any rate, how she would like to try and see. She would like to prove by her own experience whether it was not a great deal nicer to have what one wanted than to go without it.

How could she help being happy with plenty of time to read and study about all the wonderful things on the earth, above and below it? How could she help being happy with a piano on which she could learn to make music? Think of being able to make the music that was in one's heart come out of one's fingers! She drummed on the window-sill, and pretended there were keys answering to the touch of her swift fingers, and played so fast and grew so excited that she could almost hear the little melody in her mind coming out of the window-sill.

"But it is n't a piano," she said, throwing up her hands in disdain. "Not much like the lovely one of Belle Symonds that makes real music. Oh, I wish I had one!"

And how could she help being happy if she had a microscope? When she was a very little girl she used to believe in fairies, and go about peeping into flowers to find them; and she could never pass clear, shining water without looking down for a mermaid. She used to think that the fairy world could be seen if one only found the door and the key by which to enter, and she searched at the roots of trees and in the mossy crevices of rocks for an entrance like that described in the fairy-tales.

But now she knew that there was a real invisible world more wonderful than Fairyland, which could be discovered only by looking through a glass that made

its tiny living creatures large enough for human eyes to see. What the key to Fairyland would have been to her when she was younger and less wise, a microscope would be now, and she wanted it quite as much as she used to want the key.

Think of looking through this magic glass and having a drop of water become an ocean full of beautiful, bright-colored creatures floating and swimming about! Linda had heard that there were grains of wheat, and even tiny grains of sand, in which little families lived. Oh, how she would like to take a peep at them through the magic glass, and see how they kept house and what they did with themselves all day.

She felt quite sure, as she sat in the window-seat thinking of her papa's words, that although the brightness which a happy heart can cast outward on unpleasant things was very desirable, yet she would like to try how much brightness pleasant things could cast inward on her heart.

But Linda had no idea that she should have an opportunity to try; that God was going to treat her as he often treats his children—let her have her own way in order that she might become satisfied with his way. She little knew, as she dreamed in the window-seat, how soon her dreams were going to come true.

But she began to think that she had wasted enough time in dreaming, and that she had better be enjoying

this rare holiday. So she went to the bookcase, and was soon lost in a story.

It was such a delightful story that it gave her no time for reflections of any kind. Papa's talk, all her own little troubles, past and future, were forgotten. Linda knew nothing, could think of nothing, but the history of the family in her book. She was so happy that she did not stop one moment, after her usual fashion, to consider how happy she was. A book must be very interesting which could quite absorb Linda's reflective mind.

But by-and-by something did interrupt her. It was a cry, low, long, and piercing, one of those fretful, monotonous cries that will make themselves heard. Linda knew it only too well. There was a very cross baby in her mother's room, and a very tired mother, too, she had no doubt. She put her fingers in her ears to shut out the baby's cry, but she could not so easily shut out of her mind all thought of her mother. And when she moved her hands to turn over the leaves she could distinctly hear another voice trying to hush the baby's.

So cross and obstinate was one voice, so patient and tired the other, that Linda's emotions were divided between anger and pity. She was as provoked with the baby as she was sorry for her mother.

Her first impulse was to put away the book and run to mamma's rescue. But then it was her holiday;

and mamma had said that she was to do exactly as she liked all the afternoon. It was very seldom that she had an opportunity to read without interruption, and this was such a lovely story. She knew mamma would rather have her take no notice of the baby's cry. Mamma thought she was enjoying her holiday, and it would trouble her to know that she was worrying about baby. Besides, it was no new thing to have him cross. Mamma was accustomed to it, and perhaps did not mind so very much. She would not let her know that anything had troubled her this afternoon, but would run up stairs out of the way of cares and worries where she could hear neither cross nor tired voices.

But the voices followed her to the second floor, and into the guest-room, which was farther away from mamma's room than any other in the house. Then Linda remembered a low window in the garret that had the afternoon sun, and went higher up above the cares and worries. She was soon curled in a comfortable heap on the garret floor, with her head against the little window and the sunshine pouring over her. Such bright sunshine not only warmed her body, but always made her heart feel gay and glad. What a quiet, cheerful place to read in, and such a beautiful story-book as she had! Now she would find out how they came through their troubles.

The poor little girl in the story had her troubles, as well as the little girl out of it. But they were sadder

troubles than any Linda had ever known, for she herself was a cripple, and her baby brother was ill of a fever. Would he get well? Linda wondered. Her heart ached as she read the description of his sufferings, and she could hardly wait to find out whether he lived or died. She would have known all about it by this time if the baby's crying had not interrupted her reading and sent her on such a long upward journey.

But she was far beyond the sound of her little brother's voice now. There was nothing to interrupt her, and she could give all her attention to the other little girl's brother. At least she thought she could. She knew no reason why she should not spend the rest of her holiday afternoon according to her heart's desire, in solitude and quiet, among the noiseless and charming companions to be found in the pages of a book.

But how was it that she was not having a good time—that she did not seem to be one of those people as she had been down stairs in the library? She could not join the charmed circle again. The spell was broken, and her thoughts were wandering from their words and deeds to the doings of the busy, noisy people down stairs.

She could not hear their noise, to be sure. The garret-door shut out the cross voice and the tired voice. And yet she did hear them—not with her ears; but the weary tones trying to hush the shrill, fretful cry seemed to be in her heart, for they had followed her

even to this quiet, remote spot, and were begging her to come down.

Linda knew that if she should go and take the baby out of her mother's arms, she could rock and sing him to sleep in a little while. Many a time, when her mother was so tired that the baby seemed to catch her weariness, and only grew nervous and wide-awake the longer she rocked him, Linda had come in fresh from a walk or from play, and quieted him at once. So mamma sometimes took him out of her tired arms and hushed him in a minute after she had failed for half an hour. It was her turn to-day. She was sure he had not gone to sleep, and that if she opened the garret-door she would hear his cries.

But she did not open it at once. She watched the sunshine playing on the leaves of her book, and tried to become interested again in the words it was illuminating. But she was as much interested in the sunbeams' antics as in the story, and more interested in her thoughts than in either. She cared more about her own little brother than the one in the story, and only glanced over a few pages to see whether he lived or died, before she jumped up and ran down stairs. She was very glad to have learned that he recovered from his fever, but after that did not give him a thought as she ran down stairs and across halls and into her mamma's room.

Mamma was walking with the baby, and her cheeks

were flushed and her eyes looked so tired that Linda almost leaped across the room to her.

"No, dear," said mamma, as she put up her arms for him. "Go back to your book."

Linda answered by taking the baby and running over to a low rocking-chair.

"Now, mamma, run right out," she said. "You know I never can get him to sleep when there is anybody in the room."

"But I would rather take him," said mamma. "I want you to have a good holiday."

"Hush!" said Linda, putting up her finger. Then she pointed at the baby's head, which he was hiding under her arm, after refusing so long to go under mamma's arm.

In a moment Linda had the room to herself. Nothing was visible but the silky back hair of the baby's head, and out from under her arm came no cries, but only half-smothered demands for the songs he wanted. She was rather surprised that his first demand was for a real lullaby; but then the poor little fellow had been crying a long time and was very tired. In answer to his call for "Lily-bells," Linda sang, in quiet, soothing tones,

"Come, white angels, to baby and me;
Touch his blue eyes with the image of sleep;
In his surprise he will cease to weep:
Hush, child, the angels are coming to thee!"

“‘Come, white doves, to baby and me;
 Softly whirr in the silent air,
 Flutter about his golden hair:
 Hark, child, the doves are coming to thee !

“‘Come, white lilies, to baby and me,
 Drowsily nod before his eyes,
 So full of wonder, so round and wise:
 Hist, child, the lily-bells tinkle for thee !

“‘Come, white moon, to baby and me,
 Gently glide o’er the ocean of sleep,
 Silver the waves of its shadowy deep:
 Sleep, child; the whitest of dreams to thee!”

He had been gradually getting so much quieter, and was breathing so softly when Linda sang the last line, that she thought sleep and a white little dream had already come to him; but as his face was hidden she could not tell whether his eyes were closed or not. She had a way, however, of discovering whether he was asleep or awake. There was one little song against which he would call out loudly if he were not asleep. Linda sang,

“‘See, see, my baby sleeps !
 Soft, soft, the household creeps!
 If a mouse but move her foot,
 In the trap she shall be put !
 Pussy-cat, on tiptoe go ;
 Little fly, please buzz more low!”

The head nestled indignantly under Linda’s arm. It did make the baby so provoked to have people think he was asleep when he was awake.

"No, no, baby s'leep!" he said. "No, no, kitty!
No, no, itty f'y!" He considered a moment and demanded "Doggie." So Linda sang,

"Two handsome dogs,
They met one day—
'Twas Doggie Brown
And Doggie Gray.

"Both wore ribbons
Around their necks—
One pink, with stripes;
One blue, with specks.

"Well, who are you?"
Said Doggie Gray.
"I'm the dog
Of Rosy May."

"I'm Daisy Dean's,"
Said Doggie Brown,
"The loveliest lady
In the town."

"Oh, bow-wow, no!"
Said Doggie Gray.
Barked Doggie Brown,
"She is, I say."

"And Doggie Brown
Bit Doggie Gray;
And then both growled
And ran away."

The baby had giggled a little at the beginning, but was so very still at the end that Linda felt sure he must be asleep. She once more gave the mouse a warning,

charged the pussy-cat to go on tiptoe and the fly to buzz low, and as baby did not speak she knew he was really beyond the sound of her words, safe in dream-land at last. She laid him down, covered him, and crept out of the room, to return to the other little girl's brother in her story-book.

But Tommy and Polly peeped at her so wistfully from the dining-room door that she thought she would go in and see what they were about; and although mamma had told them not to ask her to come and play, their faces were so full of invitations that Linda preferred accepting to returning to her book; so the story had to wait for her again.

CHAPTER X.

IT was five o'clock before she had played long enough with Polly and Tommy to satisfy them. They were willing to release her then, and she returned to the window-seat in the library to make the most of the departing daylight.

But she had not read a chapter when the front-door slammed and a quick tread could be heard in the hall. Three pairs of little feet, racing from three different parts of the house, were next heard; then there was a chorus of laughter, there was a great clatter of words, and of course papa had come. Linda heard a shout and a thump from Tommy, and knew he had been jumped to the ceiling and landed on his feet. Then she heard, first a frightened squeal, afterwards a triumphant one, from baby, and knew he had come safely through a somerset over papa's shoulder.

She did not run as usual to meet him, for she had only just got settled with her book after so many interruptions. She heard him ask, "Where's Linda?" and her mother answering that Linda was trying to read a little while; then the voices and footsteps moved on, and she was left undisturbed once more.

But by-and-by she heard the quick, heavy tread

going from room to room, until at last it reached the library.

"What's lost, papa?" said Linda.

"My screw-driver," said papa. "I came up an hour earlier than usual to put up the cornices in the dining-room, and suppose I shall spend the hour hunting for tools."

"I'll find them for you in less time than that," said Linda.

"I thought you were not to be disturbed, little woman."

Linda laughed as she ran out of the door.

"What would I do for screw-drivers without my little girl?" said papa, when she came back with it in a moment.

"Now what else is gone?" said Linda.

"The tack-hammer, I suppose. It always is."

But Linda found it in its own place, and although the rest of the tools were where they ought to be, she did not go back to her book, for she knew that papa liked to have some one to hand him things when he was standing on a chair hammering near the ceiling. So she took her place beside his chair and gave him the tools he wanted, and held those he was not using, and also entertained him while she helped him.

"What *shall* I do without my little woman?" said papa, breaking suddenly into the midst of Linda's conversation.

If he had said *should* instead of *shall*, and if he had not emphasized the word so strongly, Linda would hardly have noticed the question. She was telling papa what wonderful things a microscope would do—how she had heard that a piece of moss became a forest under it, and revealed the most beautiful foliage. But there was something in his words that made her forget to finish the description and ask him eagerly,

“Are you going to do without me, papa? Am I going away anywhere? or are you?”

“How would you like to go away where you could have a microscope that would show you the little trees in the moss?” said papa. “You could do without me very well if you had a microscope, could n’t you?”

“I would rather stay with you and have it,” said Linda.

“But we cannot have everything in this world, Linda,” said papa. “Gaining one thing is losing another generally. If we succeed in getting something we want very much, we may be pretty sure of going without something else for it.”

Linda looked so very grave that papa was sorry he had made her so, and began to whistle cheerfully, and presently told her a funny story about something he had seen that morning.

“What wages do you ask?” said he, when the work was all done.

"Oh, do n't throw me over your shoulder, papa," squealed Linda.

"You're as nervous as an old woman," said papa.
"You do need change of air."

"Papa, what do you mean?" said Linda.

"What wages do you ask?" said papa.

"I ask you to tell me what you mean about my going away."

"Not just yet," said papa; for the truth was he had not the courage to tell her and was leaving the task for mamma. "Choose again. Will you have five cents for candy, or shall I give you the next fifteen minutes to do just what you please in?" Papa had taken out his watch. "There are fifteen minutes before supper. You may go up stairs and write a poem, or have a game of Tiger with Polly and Tommy and me."

"I do n't want to write a poem," muttered Linda.
"I do n't want five cents either."

"Does that mean that you want to play Tiger?"

For answer Linda ran to call the children. Polly was easily found; the baby was amusing himself in mamma's room, having waked very good-natured from his nap, and she had only to pick him up and carry him to the dining-room. But Tommy was not up stairs nor down stairs. Where could he be?

"Oh, he's run away, of course," said Linda, with the weary, hopeless feeling that a mother burdened with many responsibilities often has toward the close

of the day. It seemed too much that Tommy should have chosen this time for disappearing. He had not run away for more than a week, and they were just beginning to hope that he had reformed; and it was so long since papa had had time for a romp with them. There were only those fifteen minutes before supper, and by the time she found Tommy it would probably be too late for "Tiger;" and besides if there were any time left very likely papa would spend it in punishing Tommy, as he had threatened to give him a whipping the next time he ran away. The old discouraged feeling, which the pleasures of the afternoon had banished for a time, returned in full force, and Linda was in just the mood to inquire "Why cannot people have what they crave?" when she took her hat and went towards the front door.

"Where are you going?" called papa. "We're all waiting for you. You look as black as a thunder-cloud."

"Hurry up!" screamed Tommy from behind papa.

"Oh—I thought—" said Linda.

"Did you think I'd run away? Are you going to find me?" said Tommy.

Then there was a shout of laughter. But papa came and led her to the dining-room and soon laughed the doleful look from her face. Linda could not help feeling ashamed that it took so little to make her heart sink to the lowest depths, and reflected on her tenden-

cy to become easily discouraged, and was sorry that she should have been so very gloomy for so little cause, after the happy afternoon she had just spent.

But papa did not intend that she should be gloomy any more; and was soon pursuing her so wildly that she had no time to do anything but save herself from the terrible fate of being torn to pieces by a ferocious tiger.

Mamma could not understand the charms of this favorite game of the children's. But to them it was delightful. It had all the fascinations of real danger from which they could only escape by the closest attention and greatest energy and cunning, while back of the thrilling terror lay a comfortable assurance that after all it was only papa; that if worst should come to worst it would be fun still; that if they should fall into the big tiger's clutches his grip would not be too tight, nor his bites too savage.

So they ran in and out of the china closet, around and around the chairs, around and under and over the table; they hid behind the curtains, or in the little corner between the sideboard and the wall; and never knew when they were safe, which of them papa was going to chase next, when he was suddenly going to leave one and pursue another.

But he was pretty sure to leave the one who was most tired and frightened to go to the one who was least so, if they had only happened to notice that

habit of his; and he never caught one of them until he judged from their faces that they were ready to be gobbled up, or else carried off to his den.

The den was a little cupboard, and after the tiger got a victim in there he guarded the door well, so of course it was great fun to succeed in escaping and be roared at and chased by the enraged animal.

Linda had just escaped and papa was after her with a tremendous growl, when mamma put her head in the dining-room.

"Do keep still, Fred," she said. "You make more noise than all the rest of them. Mrs. Merriman is coming."

The door-bell rang at that moment, and the game was over.

"I will finish it some other time," said papa.

But it was a long, long time before Linda played Tiger again.

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. MERRIMAN was the dressmaker, and as she went out Linda heard her say,

"Well, I'm glad I could beg off from Miss Jackson for you, Mrs. Barto, I always like to accommodate my customers, and I know you're in a great hurry for the little dress. Mrs. Jackson said she'd make a day next week do for her. I'll be around bright and early to-morrow morning."

"Is Mrs. Merriman coming?" said Linda. "Who is going to have a new dress?"

"I'll tell you this evening," said mamma.

It seemed as if they never would have an opportunity to talk. The baby had slept so long in the afternoon under Linda's soothing influence that he wanted to play all the evening. Polly and Tommy were both so excited from the game of Tiger that they did not fall asleep as soon as they were tucked in and kissed good-night, but lay awake wishing for all sorts of things and demanding them of their mother and sister.

"I want you to put me to bed to-night, Linda," was Polly's first demand.

"And I want you to tell me a good, rousing story," said Tommy.

"Well run up and get undressed, dear, and I'll be there in a few minutes," said Linda to Polly; "and I'll try and think of a story, Tommy."

"Will you take it in rhyme, or in plain prose, Tom?" said papa.

"Do n't tease her to-night," said mamma.

"She shall not be teased again," said papa, with a loving pat on the head, that restored Linda's composure.

"Lin-da! Lin-da!" called Polly.

"Yes, Polly, I'm coming," said Linda, trying to disentangle her hair from the baby's clutches.

"Lin-da! Lin-da! Lin-da!" continued the voice at the top of the stairs, the tones rising in shrillness till papa bade her keep still and wait quietly for Linda, or she should not come at all.

Linda rose flushed and frowning from the floor, while the baby waved a long lock of her hair triumphantly in the air. He loved his big sister dearly, of course, but considered it his especial privilege to pull her hair, bite, pinch, and beat her.

"That baby's getting too old to be such a savage," said papa. "He knows better, Linda. You ought to slap his hands when he abuses you in that way."

The indignant frown left Linda's face in a moment at such a dreadful suggestion, and she stooped down and kissed tenderly the little fingers that held her hair.

"He's such a baby, papa dear," said Linda. "He

does n't mean anything but play. I know he would n't mean to hurt me for the world. Would you, darling?"

"No-o! no-o! no-o!" said the baby gently.

But even then, in the very act of reconciliation, he could not resist showing his power over the big sister. Out came two little rows of white teeth, and a bite would have followed the kiss immediately if Linda had not been rather expecting it and jumped in time.

"Papa," called Polly, in low, respectful tones, "can't Linda please come now?"

"I'll go," said Linda.

The little white figure was not waiting for her at the head of the stairs, neither was it in bed, nor anywhere in their room.

Linda wondered where Polly could have vanished so suddenly, and went out into the hall to look for her.

"Is that you, Polly?" she said, seeing something white against the window at the end of the hall.

"Hush!" said Polly, lifting her hand warningly.

"What are you doing?"

"Listening. Hush!" said Polly.

Linda went down the hall to her and saw that she had her ear close to a window-pane.

"I'm trying to hear the music," said Polly. "Oh, would n't it be lovely if I could hear it the way that man with the long name did?"

"The music?" said Linda. "Oh, you mean the music of the spheres."

"Whisper low," said Polly. "Tommy's door is open, and he doesn't believe it, you know. He'd only make fun of us."

"Do you believe it, Polly?" said Linda earnestly. She longed to think that it was true herself, and would have been rather glad if sensible little Polly, whom nobody ever called dreamy and fanciful, had taken the same view of the matter that she was inclined to take. "I didn't even know that you heard what I told Tommy about Pythagoras."

"That was when I had to study so hard to get my apple, you know," said Polly, "and I didn't dare let you know I was listening; but I thought it was perfectly lovely."

"And do you believe it?"

"Well," said practical Polly, "I haven't heard it yet, but maybe I will some night."

"There's a verse in the Bible," said Linda, "about the morning-stars singing together. Mamma says that the learned men think that morning-stars is a name for the angels; but I don't see why it didn't say angels, if that's what it meant."

"Do you think it really means stars?" said Polly.

"Perhaps it does," said Linda. "I'd like to ask Pythagoras all about it, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," said Polly. "I wonder if he was standing at the window with his ear close to it, the way I am, when he heard."

"Perhaps he couldn't get to sleep that night, and was lying wide awake in the dark."

"Or perhaps it woke him right up and made him jump out of bed, it was so loud and lovely," said Polly.

"Or perhaps," said Linda, "he was sitting alone on the piazza, long after everybody else had gone to bed; and perhaps there were vines all over the piazza and great big trees on the lawn—"

"And little birdies asleep in the treeses," squealed a voice from Tommy's room, "with their little headies tucked under their wingies."

"And perhaps," said Linda, not condescending to notice the interruption, though it was difficult to continue, "it was moonlight."

"Bright moonshine," said Tommy. "All moonshine."

"Or perhaps," said Polly, in a loud, crushing tone, intended to silence him—

"Perhaps he dreamed it," screamed Tommy. "Perhaps he had a nightmare."

"There is no use trying to talk out here," said Linda. "Let's go in our room."

"Where's that story you promised to tell me?" said Tommy. "I can't wait much longer."

"You'll have to wait," said Polly, drawing Linda in and closing the door behind them.

"Tommy does n't care for an education," said Lin-

da. "I do n't believe he 'd care if he never knew anything. I get so discouraged trying to teach him. But sometimes you seem to like to learn, Polly. Sometimes you seem to want to know about things just as much as I do."

"Oh, well," said Polly proudly, "I s'pose that is the difference of girls and boys."

"I feel encouraged to-night," said Linda, "to think that somebody remembers something I said in school."

Then she indulged in a few reflections on the truth that everything turns out right in the end. "Only it would have been better if Polly had listened to her teacher in school," thought she.

"You ought to learn in school, Polly," she said. "That is the best time to study and ask questions, and pay attention to what is said and remember it. But I'm glad you want to learn at all, and I'll tell you anything you want to know."

"You can tell me something about how the stars go round the other stars, then," said Polly kindly.

They had a long lesson in astronomy before they heard a voice calling loudly and endeavoring to be heard through the closed door.

"Polly must go to bed," called mamma, as Linda opened the door. "It is getting late for her to be up, and you and I have something to talk over to-night, Linda."

Polly was like a baby six months old when her bed-

time came. Linda had petted and tended her at night until she was not ashamed to demand any attention from her little mother that the baby himself might demand. Linda had even been known to hold her in her arms and rock her to sleep when she did not feel quite well.

But to-night Polly gave her hands to Linda and let her jump her into bed, after having knelt at her knee to say her prayers. Linda was tucking the clothes about her neck, preparatory to kissing her good-night, when she said,

"O Linda, you have n't half put me to bed."

"What do you want, dear?"

"You never rubbed my back," said Polly. "Mamma says little spines ought to be rubbed every night, so's to make 'em strong when they grow big."

"I forgot it," said Linda meekly. "You know I generally do it, Polly."

"Mamma *always* does," said Polly.

By this time Linda was rubbing vigorously.

"That's enough," said Polly; and Linda prepared to tuck her in once more.

"Why do n't you feel my feet?" complained Polly; "and if they're cold, you must rub 'em till the circulation gets hot. When that's cold it's dangerous, I can tell you, Linda. It might kill you."

"What is circulation?" said Linda, as she made the discovery that the two bare feet, which had been stand-

ing at windows and pattering about halls, were anything but warm.

"Oh, something in your toes—or heels, I don't know which," said Polly. "But you better keep it warm if you don't want to drop dead. Rub harder."

"I'll have to give you a lesson in physiology, instead of astronomy, the next time," said Linda. "There, now, they are as warm as toast, and I've nearly rubbed my arms off. Oh, how they ache!"

"Aren't you going to wrap them up in flannel?" said Polly. "You must wrap them all up snug and warm, and get the flannel hot by the kitchen stove."

"It would get cold while I was bringing it up, dear," said Linda, "and I'm so tired. Wont it do if I don't warm the flannel this once?"

"Well," said Polly, in rather an injured tone, "I s'pose so."

At last the feet were warm and snug in two thicknesses of flannel, and again Linda prepared to tuck Polly in.

"Aren't you going to feel my hands, I'd like to know?" said Polly. "S'pose I should have a fever? You should always feel a little girl's hands when you put her to bed. It's very safe to do so. Here they are. Now if they're hot, you scream out, 'Why, Polly Barto, you've got a dreadful fever!' and run down stairs just as fast as you can go and get me some pills out of the medicine closet."

"Why, Polly Barto," said Linda, "You have n't any fever at all. Your hands are as cool and moist as they can be. So good-night. I can't put you to bed any longer. I hear mamma calling me every little while."

"Good-night," said Polly reluctantly. "I s'pose mamma's got to have you all the time."

"Linda! Linda! O Lin-da!" she called, as she reached the head of the stairs without answering her.

"I can't come again, Polly."

Though the tones were very firm, Polly pleaded,

"Just a minute. I promise to let you go in only a minute."

"Well, what is it?" said Linda, from the doorway.

"Linda, is n't it funny that the way you can tell little girls are sick is when their hands are hot, and the way you can tell dogs are sick is when their noses get hot?"

"Very funny," said Linda.

"Cool hands seem to be the best things for little girls, and cold noses for dogs; do n't they, Linda?"

"Oh, decidedly," replied a voice from Tommy's room. "It is about time for my story, I should think. How long do you s'pose I can wait for stories?"

"You fell asleep, Tommy," said Linda. "I'm sure you must have been asleep, for I got to the head of the stairs without your calling me."

"Perhaps I did drop off a minute," said Tommy.

"But no one could sleep through all that screaming of Polly's. Let's have the story."

"There was once a little boy," began Linda.

"Who ran away whenever he got a chance," said Tommy, "and made his big sister lots of trouble chasing after him, till one day the cars ran over him and killed him; so do n't run away, little boys, or the cars'll smash you one of these days! That's what you were going to say. I could tell from the way your voice sounded."

"But I wasn't," said Linda. "I was going to tell you what happened to a boy who teased his little sister."

"I do n't care what happened to him. I wont listen," said Tommy. "Tell me something funny."

"You would always rather be amused than instructed," said Linda.

"I should think I got instruction enough in school," said Tommy.

Linda was going to draw some comparisons between Tommy and Polly, and tell him that if he would only heed the instructions he received during school hours, perhaps she would not try to teach him at other times; but before she could say the words she felt sorry that she had even meant to say them. There was not much use in trying to instruct him, she often thought, and she might as well have a comfortable time amusing him. So she asked what the story should be about.

"A panther breaking loose from a menagerie," said Tommy. "Tell me how awfully he scared the people, and what a lot of 'em he ate."

The story was not to Linda's taste; but she made it as fierce as possible to please her listener, and spared neither men, women, children, nor little babies when Tommy demanded one of them for the panther's jaws.

"That's splendid!" said he, when she finished. "But I feel awfully wide-awake yet. Can't you give us another?"

"No, not to-night," said Linda resolutely.

She kissed him quickly, and ran down stairs as fast as possible, though a feeble "Linda!" from Polly tried to stop her.

CHAPTER XII.

"HERE you are at last, little mother," said mamma.
"Are all your babies sound asleep?"

"No," said Linda; "this is one of their restless nights. It seems as if I never could get away from them."

"Baby Freddie is restless, too," said mamma. "I have rocked him to sleep three times."

She looked very bright and happy this evening, although she had been looking rather sad and as if something were on her mind, during the afternoon.

"I heard the door slam," said Linda.

"Yes, papa has gone to the office," mamma said. "He came up early, and had to go down again. You ought to go away too, Linda. It is time those heavy eyes were asleep; but I told you I wanted to tell you something before you went to bed."

"Yes, mamma, and I'm so anxious to hear it. Am I going away for a visit? Papa kept talking about my going somewhere; but I didn't think it could really be true."

"It really is," said mamma. "I don't wonder that you could hardly believe you were to have a vacation; but you need it and deserve it, dear. So we have accepted one of Aunt Belinda's invitations at last."

"Was that what her letter was about? But it made you cry, mamma. I knew you had been crying when you came out of the bedroom after you read it."

Mamma smiled so brightly that one could hardly fancy her with tears in her eyes; for she was quite determined that Linda should not know nor feel any of the pain that she felt at the thought of losing her little daughter for a while. She wanted the whole experience—the anticipation, the visit itself, and the recollections of it—to be a sunny experience for Linda from beginning to end.

"What a silly mother," she said, laughing, "to cry over good news."

"How long am I going to stay?" said Linda.
"And when am I going, mamma?"

"You are going in a few days," said mamma—"next Tuesday; and you must not ask how long you are going to stay, for nobody knows—perhaps for ever."

The words "for ever" did not sound so long and dreary to Linda's ears as they might if mamma had not spoken them very cheerfully. Still she did not quite like it, and said with some dismay,

"You are not going to give me away?"

"Aunt Belinda would like that precious gift very much," said mamma; "but we have refused it a great many times, and are not quite generous enough to

promise yet that she may have you for her own little girl. But you are to stay as long as you are happy, Linda; and you will have everything that you want most to make you happy. You are going to a delightful school, and Aunt Belinda has a piano, so that you can take lessons and learn to play the beautiful music that you say you sometimes dream about. Perhaps she has a microscope. I know that she has a great many books, and that when you are out of school you will have nothing to do but amuse yourself. You can read, and dream and write your little poems, and there will be no babies to disturb you. Your only care will be your lessons, and you will have no work but studying, which you like better than play. Is not that a delightful prospect, Linda? Can you believe that such a good time is coming?"

"It is all that I can do to believe it," said Linda, with a very bewildered look in her eyes. "It seems more like a dream than any dream I ever had."

"But you will find in a few days that it is very sober truth," said mamma. "Next week, Tuesday, when you are sitting with Aunt Belinda by the open fire in the little parlor where she rocks and knits every evening, perhaps the home-life which you have left behind you, with all its cares and worries, will begin to seem like a dream."

For some reason those old, familiar cares and worries seemed rather dear to Linda at that moment, and

the vision of Aunt Belinda knitting and rocking by the open fire chilled her heart.

"I wish you were going to be there," she said; and the picture changed in a moment. She knew she should never feel lonely sitting by Aunt Belinda's side if mamma were on the other side of her, and she could steal her hand into hers for warmth and company at any moment.

"I could n't leave my babies here to follow my one little lamb out of the fold," said mamma.

"Then I wish—" she began, when a voice from far-away called,

"Linda! Linda!"

"Go to sleep, Polly," said Linda.

"I'm choking," she said. "I'm nearly thirsted to death. You might get me some water."

"Bring another glass for me," called Tommy.

"O dear! I thought they were asleep long ago," said Linda.

But she was very glad to go for the water to-night, and thought nothing of weary feet. She only thought of the nights coming so soon, when she would be too far away to answer their calls.

She kissed Polly very tenderly after giving her the water, and Tommy also, though she knew he disliked it.

"I wish," she said, when she was once more sitting by mamma's side, "that you were all going."

Mamma laughed, and asked her where she thought Aunt Belinda could stow away a whole family.

"Then I wish—"

"But you must n't wish for anything, dear," said mamma. "Do n't begin to think about the things you cannot have when you are going to have so much, and just what you have always wanted most. When a little girl receives a great deal she ought to be willing to lose a little."

"Papa said something like that this afternoon," said Linda, "that you could n't get one thing without losing another."

"So the only way is to be thankful for the gains, and not think about the losses," said mamma. "And I hope you will not miss us very much, dear. It is such a good opportunity for you to receive an education that I want you to improve it thoroughly. And I am afraid you will lose some of the advantages that Aunt Belinda offers you if you are homesick and unhappy. So try not to miss us too much; and enjoy the studying and reading and music as much as you possibly can."

"I was only going to say," said Linda, "that I wished auntie had let me go to school here."

"You would have too many cares on your mind if you stayed at home, Linda. You could never get away from them. It would be as it was this afternoon. Although I gave you a holiday, you could not escape

the cares. You went up and up till you reached the top of the house, and they followed you all the way. You will have to go farther off than that to get beyond their reach."

"Linda!" called a loud, peremptory voice. "Where is that lump of sugar you promised me, Linda Barto?"

"What lump, Tommy?" said Linda.

"You know you promised me a lump if I'd say over the fours and fives while I was undressing."

"That was last night," said Linda.

"Why didn't you give it to me last night then?"

"Because you forgot to ask me for it."

"Tommy," called mamma, "go to sleep directly. You have waited so long for the sugar that you can wait a little longer. Linda will give it to you in the morning."

"Oh, please let me give it to him to-night, mamma," said Linda, "because I am going away."

"Well, Tommy," said mamma, "I will let Linda go up once more; and then neither you nor Polly must speak another word."

"I'm awfully thirsty," squealed Polly. "Can't Linda bring me some water?"

"No, Polly, you have had water enough. Go to sleep directly."

"Good-night, Tommy dear," said Linda tenderly, lingering after she had given him the sugar.

"All right," said Tommy, "but don't kiss me again."

"No, I won't."

"Well, Linda," said mamma, "I think we must have peace for the rest of the evening. They cannot think of any more excuses for calling you away."

"I was going to say that if we had a nurse for the children I could stay at home without their disturbing my studies. Auntie might pay for a nurse and let me go to school here."

"Then she would have no little girl to sit with her in the lonely parlor," said mamma. "She is anticipating a great deal of pleasure from your company, and I hope you will be a very entertaining guest. Besides it is not proper to suggest how people shall do us favors. It is their privilege to do them in their own way and our place to accept them as they are offered. Aunt Belinda does not offer to give us a nurse and let you remain at home."

"Oh, Linda!" came ringing down the stairs, "Oh! oh! oh!"

It was a scream of such real terror that both mamma and Linda ran. By the time they reached the foot of the stairs Polly was at the top of them, and close behind her stood Tommy inquiring what was the matter.

"Oh, my tooth, my tooth!"

"Does it ache?" said Linda.

"It's dropped out," said Polly, "and the bleed's running down my chin."

"That's nothing at all, you silly thing," said Tommy. "Mine are always dropping out; and for every old one you get a bigger new one in its place."

"Do you?" said Polly.

"Of course you do. What a row about a little tooth!" said Tommy, turning away from her in disgust, and going back to his room.

"I was just taking hold of it, only very gently," sobbed Polly, as Linda put her arms around her, "and it tumbled right out in my hand, and I felt the bleed coming, and I was so scared! If it was n't for you, Linda, I'd be scared now."

"Who will comfort the little sister after next Tuesday?" thought Linda, as she gave her a great squeeze and took her back to bed. She bathed her chin and hands, brought a glass of water for the afflicted mouth; and once more went down to mamma.

"Does papa want me to go?" she asked suddenly.

Mamma seemed a little surprised by the question, but after a moment answered,

"Papa thinks that home is the best place for children, dear. He thinks you are getting an education slowly but surely here, and that there is another kind of education that children can only get in their own homes. Papa says that the little girl who is well off is the little girl with a contented disposition, wherever

she may be, and he thinks you will find advantages and disadvantages everywhere. But he has given his consent to your going."

"And is n't he willing to have me go?"

"Yes, he is quite willing that you should try the advantages and disadvantages in a new life; and has promised auntie that you may stay three months if you like it. Of course if you like it for three months you will like it for longer. That is why I said you might stay for ever."

Linda would certainly have been homesick already if there had not been something so very bright and cheering in mamma's face and tones.

"Now I know why it was a special occasion to-day," said Linda, "and why papa let me stay in his office."

"Yes, he knew you would not be troubling him again very soon."

"We had a lovely talk," said Linda. "I'm glad of it. Oh, what's that?"

The loud thump which they heard was followed so quickly by a cry that they knew it was baby this time.

"He can always fall out of bed when there is nothing else to do," said mamma. "I thought we were safe from interruptions for the rest of the evening. Well, Linda, I wonder what will come next."

"Tommy will want more water in a minute," said Linda, "or perhaps Polly will pull out another tooth."

They had found the baby on the floor by this time, more angry than hurt; but so very angry, that a great deal of coaxing and petting was required from his two mothers.

"Let me rock him to sleep, mamma," said Linda. "I can't do it many nights."

It was well for Linda that she did not know why mamma left the room so quickly. Tears gathered in her eyes at her little daughter's words, and she hurried out into the hall where she could wipe them away unseen.

"Darling, darling little Freddie," whispered Linda to him over and over. "The sweetest baby in the whole wide world! Sister's precious little brother!"

"Sister's pinky," said he.

"Yes, so he is."

"Sing Pinky."

"'Pinky, pinky, posy, pan,
All the ladies in the lan'
Love the pinky, posy, pan.'"

she sang.

Then before baby could ask for another she began to sing from the fulness of her own heart; and for a wonder he did not object, but seemed very well pleased with her selections, perhaps because they were all so flattering to him. She sang,

"'Little, brother, darling boy,
You are very dear to me.'"

She sang,

“‘He is my brother,
There’s ne’er such another
In all the world round.’”

Then she sang so sadly, “What is home without a baby?” that he would certainly have objected to the dismal tones if he had not been too far on the road to dreamland.

After trying “See, see, my baby sleeps,” and receiving no angry contradiction from her little brother, Linda laid him down, and once more she was in the parlor with mamma.

She looked so happy that Linda asked,

“Are you glad I am going, mamma? Are you perfectly willing?”

“I think it is the best thing for you, dear,” said mamma. “And so I am glad.”

“But what will you do without me? Who will teach the children, and who will help you all day?”

“Mrs. Smith is coming whenever I want her,” said mamma, in a business-like tone. “That is easily arranged. You know we accomplish a good deal when she comes for a day.”

“The children don’t like her,” said Linda.

“I can take care of the children and let her do other things.”

“But I don’t see—”

“You needn’t see anything about it,” said mamma,

laughing. "I have everything planned, and we will do beautifully without you. It would worry me very much to know that you were worrying about us; and I want you to promise me that you wont think of home cares after you get away."

"Perhaps I can't help it."

"Oh, but you must remember what it is for me to have a great, strong woman like Mrs. Smith in the place of a little woman like you."

"I think you'll wish you had your little woman instead sometimes," said Linda.

"Do n't be so vain, ma'am," said mamma, while she was thinking how she should always, always be wishing for her little woman. "Now come up in my lap for a few minutes, and then you must go to bed, for Mrs. Merriman will want you early to-morrow morning. She is going to make you a fine new dress to wear in the city."

"And I've never seen it," said Linda.

"No, I could not show it to you without telling you all the secret."

But Linda did not ask to see it now. She forgot the dress as soon as she was on mamma's lap with her arms around her neck and her head on her shoulder. How could she care about dresses when such a sweet, rare opportunity for one of mamma's precious talks was given her?

This talk was full of motherly counsel for the new

life that was coming ; and although she hinted at possible trials in that bright life, and told Linda how she must bear them, no tinge of sadness crept into the conversation. It sent the little girl to bed with a happy heart, and prepared her wisely and bravely for what lay before her.

Linda remembered and cherished that talk for many a day, as it was the last long one before her departure. The few days that followed were so full of sewing and the general bustle of preparation that she hardly had time to realize she was going when the hour came to bid them good-by. Mamma had planned it all. She did not wish the last day clouded with too many regrets and farewells, and so had given Linda opportunity for neither.

Although the partings could be nothing but sad, yet Linda rode away towards the new life full of hope and courage ; and on the cars she dreamed out her first letter home, which was a glowing description of a series of most delightful experiences.

She was still dreaming the postscript when she heard the name of her station called, and in a moment the gentleman who had her in charge had put her off into Aunt Belinda's arms.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I HAVE got you at last," said Aunt Belinda, when they were in the carriage, "and I hope to keep you a long while. You have determined not to be homesick, have n't you?"

"Yes, auntie," said Linda, "mamma wants me to be very happy here; and I think it will be lovely to go to school."

"If you are not too tired, you may begin to-morrow," said auntie, "and you may take your first music-lesson as soon as you please."

"To-day?" said Linda eagerly.

"Well," said auntie, laughing, "there is not much of the day left, dear. So perhaps you had better wait till to-morrow for that too."

The little remnant of the day was soon gone, and auntie and Linda were sitting in the parlor by the open fire. Linda had been introduced to her new home, established in her pretty little bedroom, had tried the piano which stood in the library, and looked at the books in the low bookcases that seemed to have been made especially for a little girl of her height; she and auntie had talked about the old life and the new; they had dined; and now as evening came were sitting rocking in the firelight.

Auntie had bought her a pretty, low rocking-chair like her own, and back and forth they both went, keeping time and saying nothing. For they seemed already to have talked about everything that was of interest to both, so that nothing was left to say. It is always rather difficult for two naturally quiet people to keep up a conversation. Linda was more inclined to dream than talk at any time; and auntie, from living alone so long, had formed a habit of silence; besides, she was quite unused to children, and did not know what subjects interested them most.

So there they sat rocking, and suddenly it occurred to Linda that it was very still. She made an effort and said something; auntie made an effort and answered her; then they were silent again. Presently auntie took her knitting, and after her eyes began to follow the stitches, she seemed to forget that there was a little girl in the room.

Linda looked up at the clock. It was only seven. They had dined at half-past five, and it seemed as if she and auntie had spent a long evening together since dinner. But her bedtime was still an hour and a half away. How long that hour and a half seemed, which at home was so short that she seldom found an opportunity for a little quiet reading after the toils of the day. It was the time when the children's wants were most numerous and she was busiest.

Who was putting the children to bed to-night? she

wondered. Who would see if Polly's feet were cold or her hands feverish? Who would tell Tommy a story, and run to get them water? Who would pick up the baby and comfort him and sing to him if he should fall out of bed to-night?

Poor mamma's feet were too tired to run up and down stairs in the evening, and the baby liked his sister's songs better than any others. But there was no one except mamma to do it all, for Mrs. Smith's days ended at six o'clock; and even if she should stay, it was so absurd to think of her waiting upon the children that Linda laughed at the very idea.

Mrs. Smith was a poor old woman without family or friends, who lived alone in one little room, and supported herself, as she said, "by odd jobs." She charged very little for a day's labor, and would mend, darn stockings, wash dishes, cook, "or do anything I can turn my hand to for fifty cents and my feeding," said she. But she was not in demand, as she was not altogether an agreeable old woman to spend a day with. Mamma, however, had a gift of making her useful and keeping her in good temper, so she sometimes came to help them. Linda had left her in mamma's bedroom darning stockings when she came away, but she knew that she had gone back to her little room by this time, and that she would never be of much assistance with the children. Tommy quarrelled with her, Polly was saucy, and the only child in the family

who had patience with Mrs. Smith was sitting far away at Aunt Belinda's fireside.

"Papa has gone to the office," thought Linda, "or is reading in the corner. His feet are up high on the foot-rest—I wonder who got his slippers for him; and he won't stir this evening. I can see mamma running up and down stairs, and then across the hall to the baby—I believe I shall see her that way every evening."

Then Linda suddenly remembered how mamma had warned her against worrying about the home-cares. So she tried to think that Mrs. Smith had given her so much help during the day that she was fresh for the evening duties. At any rate, she had promised mamma to try and be quite happy; and why should she not be at the very outset of a life in which she was to have all the desires of her heart gratified?

She had an attractive book in her lap, but all this time had been looking into the fire and seeing visions of home. Now she tried to busy herself in the story, but kept wondering, wondering about home. However, there were other joys to beguile her thoughts from care.

"Auntie, may I play on the piano?" she asked.

"Yes, dear," said auntie. "Do anything you please. The gas is lighted in the library. Are you tall enough to reach it? Or shall I go and turn it up?"

"I will climb on a chair," said Linda.

She made the room as bright as possible, and sat down with her head full of music. It did not come out of her fingers by any rules, but it really sounded like a tune, auntie said; and Linda enjoyed it quite as much as she used to think she would. The slow, soft melody that followed her light, gliding touch accorded so well with the melody in her mind that Linda felt all the rapture of a real musician who has won success.

But the music made her dreamy, and she dreamed of swaying multitudes by the power of her touch or of her voice. How lovely it would be to sing! Suppose some day she should play so wonderfully that people would come from far and near to hear her. She could see a great hall filled with eager listeners, and they should be moved to tears and laughter by her melodies.

She thought she would like very much to be a singer. She wondered if she had the necessary gift; and auntie was rather startled to hear a small, shrill voice piping some operatic airs to the accompaniment of a crazy little tune which seemed to have no connection with the song.

But Linda fortunately did not notice the lack of harmony between song and accompaniment, and went on dreaming of the songs she should sing before admiring multitudes.

The best part of it all would be papa's and mamma's pride. They would sit near the stage; and Linda

in imagination looked down from her elevation into their proud and happy faces. There was no weariness in mamma's face.

"She shall never be tired in those days when I earn plenty of money," thought Linda. "She shall never have to work hard, the way she does now."

With that "now" Linda jumped from the future back to the present, and was in her own home again. Now mamma was always sewing, or doing housework, or running after the children when she was tired. She had to run after the children because her eldest child, her little woman, her little mother, had forsaken her, deserted her post, gone off to be lazy and have a good time at Aunt Belinda's. Poor, tired mamma! how Linda longed to throw her arms around her neck and tell her that she loved her because she was the very dearest mother in the world.

Aunt Belinda wondered why it was so quiet in the library. Voice and piano had stopped making music. She thought she had better see if Linda had anything to amuse her, and looking in, discovered a little girl with her head buried in her arms on the piano. She was afraid it was homesickness, and asked cheerily,

"Asleep, my dear?"

"No, auntie," said Linda, lifting a face, not tear-stained, as she had feared, only very dreamy and rather sad.

"Not asleep, and of course not homesick," said

auntie. "Perhaps you are tired of the piano, and we can find some other amusement."

"No. I will play a little longer," said Linda.

So auntie went back to her knitting, and Linda attempted to play. But there was no melody in her mind now, so of course none in her fingers. She could not dream music, she could not play it; she could not dream of future greatness. Although she tried her best, she could not conjure up that delightful vision of the crowded hall again, with mamma and papa on the front seat, wearing happy faces.

The faces she saw were tired and sad for the loss of a little girl who had gone far away. She jumped up from the piano; she could not stay there any longer.

"Oh," thought she, as she stood in the middle of the room, clasping her hands so tightly that it hurt, "what shall I do? It is just like that day in the garret. I could n't get away from them anywhere. It didn't make any difference how far up I went, I kept hearing their voices. Mamma said I would have to go farther than the garret to get away from care. She thought this would be far enough, but it is n't, it is n't. I believe their voices are in my heart, and if I went around the world they'd go too. I can hear Polly calling, and the baby crying, and mamma singing. Oh, if I could just run to them, the way I ran down the garret stairs that day!"

"What are you standing there thinking about,

dear?" said auntie, coming once more to look after Linda, now that the music had ceased.

She spoke so gently, and put her arms around her so lovingly, that Linda felt ashamed of the terrible longing for home which had almost overcome her.

"What can I do for you, dear? Would you like me to play any game? Or will you sit on my lap while I try to tell you a story? Is n't there anything I can do to amuse you?"

"I think I will write to mamma," said Linda.

"Are you not too tired to-night, dear? You had better be amused to-night and write the letter when you are rested in the morning."

But Linda knew that nothing would rest her so much as speaking to her mother; and that neither books, music, games, nor any of the joys of the new life, had power to charm her thoughts from home to-night.

"I would like to write to her," she said.

"Very well, dear; but make it a short letter."

CHAPTER XIV.

AUNTIE brought her own writing-desk from the library, opened it on the parlor table, gave Linda a high chair and a footstool, so that she was as cosey and comfortable as possible before the parlor fire. She looked resolutely away from those slow, blue flames that made her dreamy and showed her pictures of home; she dipped her pen in the ink and wrote: "My own darling mamma."

She glanced into the fire to find her first sentence, for her head was so full of thoughts, crowding upon each other in bewildering confusion, that she did not know which to select. She had so many things to say that she did not know what to say first.

She looked at the fire and she looked at auntie. She wondered how her knitting-needles could go in and out so swiftly, touching each other so often, without making any noise; she wondered how her rockers went back and forth, back and forth, all the evening, and not a sound over the carpet. Were her knitting-needles different from other knitting-needles, that they should never click? and her rockers different from other rockers, that they should never creak?

She did wish the chair would not be quite so still;

she wished the fire would crackle; she wished a door would slam; she wished auntie would cough—or even sneeze. The perfect silence made her nervous. How could any one be expected to write a letter in such a terribly quiet room?

As Linda asked that question she came very near making a little noise herself, for she almost laughed aloud. She remembered how she used to long and search for a quiet place to write in at home; how she used to complain of the children's constant confusion, and think that if she could only get away somewhere in a still, lonely room, beautiful poetry would flow in streams from her pencil. Nothing could be stiller and lonelier than this room; and now she was thinking if only some one would make a noise, how it would help her letter-writing. Here she was sagely reflecting that noise was the best element for everything—heart-happiness, letter-writing, and everything! What a contrary little girl! never knowing when she had her own way, only wanting things because she could not get them! What an absurd Linda! No wonder she laughed at herself.

She could not have laughed at anything a few minutes ago; but she was lighter-hearted now than she had been since she bade mamma good-by at noon. Writing to her was not talking, to be sure; but it was the next best thing. How she wished she could climb up in her lap, put her arms around her neck, and tell

her all she had to say; but she must not think of that; she would go on with her letter—pour all her heart into a sheet of paper.

Even the disturbing quiet of the room could not prevent her thoughts from flowing fast. What a blessing to have a mother always ready to hear everything that perplexed and burdened a little child's mind! Linda never had a trouble which she could not tell mamma. She had never known a time when she could not roll her burdens off upon her mother's love and sympathy, and have them lightened, if not removed. She already felt that lightness of spirit which always came at the mere prospect of "telling mamma."

So dipping her pen in the ink again, she wrote: "I want to see you so much I don't know what to do. I cannot read the loveliest story to-night. I don't care one bit for playing on the piano now. I cannot think of anything but you, and I feel as if I must go home on the first train to-morrow."

What a load was off her mind already! It was almost equal to having gone home on the first train.

"I cannot live away from you all, mamma darling," she continued, saying just what was uppermost in her thoughts. "If you will let me come home, I will never want to go to school again, or take music-lessons, or anything. My heart aches to go home. I would rather stay in the kitchen there and wash dishes all

day, than to stay in the library and play on the piano all day here. Please write to auntie that you cannot spare me any longer. I don't care about anything but seeing you."

Linda had poured out so much of her heart before she paused to reflect. But her reflections must come sooner or later; and it did not take her long to discover that it was a selfish letter she was preparing for those who loved her. What would auntie think if she should happen to peep over her shoulder? Would not mamma be disappointed to have her miss all the opportunities for improvement that auntie had so kindly offered? Would not papa think her a coward? Would she herself be satisfied that she had acted wisely and bravely to-morrow when she reached home and began the old life again?

"Courage, Linda. Do not give up at once. Try to bear it a little longer. Be brave for the sake of those who love you." Something like that she said to herself as she told auntie she had spoiled a sheet of paper, and asked for another.

She threw the cowardly letter into the blue flames. They lapped over it slowly, and burned it bit by bit, in a quiet and orderly manner. "Why don't you snatch it?" thought Linda. "Why don't you toss it and catch it? Any other fire would. Why don't you burn it up fast, and make it snap and crackle? Because you're a stupid old fire, and as slow and still as

everything else in the room. I'd like to give you a good poking."

It was very hard to struggle against the depressing quiet all about her, and at the same time make an effort to keep out of her letter everything that she most wanted to say. It was a hard letter to write, but at last she finished it, and this is how she succeeded :

" MY OWN DARLING MAMMA : I arrived safely, and have read part of a story already, and played something on auntie's piano that she says sounds like a tune. I enjoyed it very much.

" There are a great many beautiful books in the library ; and I am going to school to-morrow. Perhaps I will take my first music-lesson to-morrow, too.

" Auntie is knitting, and I am sitting near her, writing at her desk which she brought out of the library for me. She bought me a pretty little chair like her own. Is n't she kind ?

" I have a very pretty room. I wish Polly could have half of the bed, only it is too narrow for both of us. There is a lovely picture of a mother with a baby in her arms over my bed. Auntie says it is a Madonna, but I think it looks like you.

" That is all I have to tell you to-night ; but there will be more for my next letter. I send, oh, so much love to you and dear papa and the children. Good-by.

" Your loving little daughter,

" BELINDA BARTO."

Linda was glad that she had succeeded with her letter, but was still unrelieved of her heartache. It was such a new, strange feeling to have a sorrow shut up within her which she could not pour into any one's loving ears, that she drew a long, long, deep sigh, as if she could breathe her burden out and get rid of it upon the air. But the sigh did not carry the heartache with it; it only convinced Aunt Belinda that the child was indeed very homesick.

But Linda could have borne her pent-up homesickness better if she had known how glad the brave letter was going to make mamma. When it arrived mamma felt sure the new life was proving more attractive than she had dared hope, and that her little girl was quite happy. She did not know how well she had learned unselfishness from her own example, nor suspect how she had struggled to conceal her heartache and keep out of the letter one word which could give pain at home.

"I think a long night's rest will be the best thing for you, Linda," said auntie. "Do you feel tired enough to go to bed now? The longer you sleep the fresher you will be for school to-morrow."

"I am tired," said Linda, "and I would like to go to bed right away, auntie."

So auntie and she went up stairs, and auntie tucked her in as nicely and kissed her as tenderly as if she had been some little girl's mamma some time or other. But

Linda knew that her only child was the one little boy whom she kept but a few months and who left her home desolate when he died; for his papa had gone to heaven not long before, so that the second death left auntie quite alone.

"It is very pleasant to have some one to say good-night to," said auntie; and Linda, thinking of all auntie had lost, resolved to do what she could to help fill the vacancies in her heart and home.

"Besides," she said to herself, "perhaps I will never be so homesick again as I am to-night. Perhaps school will make all the difference. Perhaps it will be easy to be happy to-morrow; and I mean to do as mamma told me, and not let myself think about the cares at home any more. Now I will go right to sleep."

But it was not mamma's cares that she found difficult to keep from her thoughts now. Her heart was aching for herself. Although she was tired bodily, the weight of those sorrows which she had not poured into any one's loving ears so oppressed her that she could not sleep.

She had said her prayers before auntie went down, but suddenly she realized, with a sweet sense of relief, that there was some One to whom she need not be ashamed nor afraid to tell the whole story, which she could not tell even mamma; and she was on her knees again in a moment.

How easy it was to talk to her heavenly Father out

of a full heart; how near he seemed now that she was far from her dear ones, and yet no farther from him than if she had never left home. What a friend he seemed to Linda when her best earthly friends could not come to her. There was comfort in the thought that she had one Friend from whom no distance could separate her.

She felt better when she jumped into bed the second time. Part of her grief had gone in the telling. It was not so unbearable now that some One knew how homesick she was; how far away she felt from the love and shelter which had always been around her.

She was like a little lamb astray on the hills in the darkness, who goes searching and bleating in vain for its shepherd. She realized bitterly that she was out of the home-fold where the others were sleeping, secure and contented, to-night; and her heart turned with longing to the Good Shepherd whose fold was wide enough always to take her in.

It was so pleasant to feel that she had not wandered from him and that he would never leave her, that Linda seemed to find her way back from those cold and desolate hills where she had been astray, and creep into shelter, all tired and wounded as she was.

She remembered then a promise she had given papa in his office, and understood why he had asked her to repeat the twenty-third psalm, during the next three months, whenever she should be in trouble. It

seemed such a tender and fatherly provision for this time of her need ; it showed such loving forethought, and was so like that other great Fatherly love which she felt bending over her from the skies, that some sweet, grateful tears came and carried a little more of the heartache away.

Then she began to repeat the psalm : "The Lord is my Shepherd." The Lord who had stooped to listen to her pitiful little tale and share her secret, the Lord whose love was as great as his power, was the Shepherd who took the lambs in his arms and carried them in his bosom. One of his lambs nestled closer to his bosom at that thought.

"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Could any one need that more than she? Was she not always wanting something? When she was at home she fretted for books and a piano, for quiet and leisure. Now that she had those desires gratified, she longed for home. What was it that she could find in the Good Shepherd's fold to satisfy her and take away the want and pain she so often knew? Was it the contented heart of which papa had talked? Was it the blessed secret of happiness which he said some people found and carried with them everywhere?

"Please give me a happy heart," was the next prayer that Linda offered ; and she resolved that she would try to be contented in the new life and avoid the mistakes she had made in the old. She would try

to think so much of all the blessings she was receiving that she would have no time to brood over her losses ; she would enjoy the books and piano, the study and the quiet, and not miss her darlings any more than she could help ; try to think more of what she possessed than of what she wanted, and so perhaps the wants would cease to ache and satisfaction come.

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.” She loved to lie down in green pastures on a summer day, when the sky was blue through the branches of the trees, the grass a soft couch, the air sweet, and songs all about her. The words gave her rest.

“He leadeth me beside the still waters.” There was even deeper repose in these words. She remembered the still, clear pond under the willows at home, where nothing but peace could ever come.

“He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me”— “thou art with me,” she repeated, as she struggled to keep awake long enough to say the whole.

But clinging to the happy thought that she need fear nothing on the morrow if her Lord was with her, this little lamb, astray from the home-fold, fell fast asleep in the green pastures and beside the still waters which the Shepherd had provided for her rest.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN she awoke she saw a few bright little sunbeams struggling to get into her room. They were having such a hard time of it against the closed blinds, being only able to gain admittance through a few small holes, that Linda jumped up to help them. She threw the blinds wide open, and her room was flooded with light.

Everything was shining around her; the pretty ornaments that auntie had arranged on the shelves and brackets glistened, the long mirror caught the sunshine and reflected it everywhere, the pictures stood out brightly, and the mother with the baby in her arms looked at her through a radiance.

Her gentle eyes had saddened Linda a little last night with their intense gaze, but their expression seemed more cheerful this morning. Linda fancied they watched her lovingly, and accepted the picture as a friend.

It was wonderful how differently everything looked in the morning light; the room that had seemed so dreary last night, in spite of its pretty ornaments, wore a homelike aspect this morning.

It was very still, of course, too still altogether. But

while Linda was missing the bustle and confusion with which every day began at home, and wishing that she could hear merry voices shouting good-morning and little feet pattering about, some one pulled the door-bell so hard that it rang loudly through every corner of the house.

Linda heard auntie hurrying to the door and then saying,

“ You here so early, Jinnie?”

“ It is n’t too early for me,” answered loud ringing tones. “ Where is she?”

“ In bed, I presume,” said auntie. “ You cannot see her yet. We have n’t breakfasted.”

“ I have,” said Jinnie. “ I do n’t care if she is in bed. Wont you let me see her?”

“ My dear little sunshine, I want you to see her as soon as possible,” said auntie; “ and if you can’t wait—”

“ I can’t,” said Jinnie; then Linda heard her come running and laughing up the stairs.

What Linda saw peeping in at her door, was a round face, rosy and merry. She did not wonder that auntie called her sunshine, for nothing in the room shone brighter than her twinkling black eyes and the roguish smile which belonged as much to her two deep dimples as to her mouth, and which seemed to be a part of every feature.

What Jinnie saw, seated on the floor, was a little

girl just about to put a bare foot into a stocking, and looking up at her with large dreamy blue eyes, in a grave, bewildered manner.

"How sober she looks," thought Jinnie. "I wonder if I've frightened her?"

"Peek-a-boo!" she said. Linda laughed in reply.

"My name is Jinnie," was the next remark.

"And mine is Linda," was the answer.

"Mine is Virginia Mansfield."

"Mine is Belinda Barto."

"Belinda!" said Jinnie. "What a funny name!"

She noticed that the fair little girl on the floor blushed very easily.

"I am named for auntie," said Linda, with dignity.

"For this auntie? Mrs. Richardson?"

"Yes," said Linda.

"I never knew her name was Belinda. Why don't they call you Bee?"

"I don't know," said Linda, pulling on her second stocking.

"Might call you Bumble Bee," said Jinnie, perching herself on the foot of the bed, and feeling an irresistible desire to tease Linda. "Or Honey Bee—if you're sweet enough. Are you sweet? Or Busy Bee. Do you like to work?"

"What a disagreeable girl," thought Linda, "to stare at me so and make fun of my name!"

But when she turned and looked into Jinnie's face it

was impossible to feel angry, for there was nothing but good humor there.

"Do you like to work?" she insisted.

"Yes," answered Linda shortly; "sometimes."

"But I wont call you Busy Bee," said Jinnie, with a charming change of voice. "I'll call you Honey Bee, because I think you're real sweet."

"You'd better call me Linda, I think."

"Well, Linda then, I am glad you came."

"Are you?" said Linda. "Why?"

"Because we are going to be intimate, very intimate friends."

"How can you tell?"

"My mamma and your auntie are; and Mrs. Richardson has been talking to mamma and me about you all the time. She said I must look after you and be your friend now you were away from home and everything. I'm going to be like brothers and sisters to you, you know; I'm going to take you to school to-day and take all the care of you. Mrs. Richardson asked me to come and see you the very first thing. But I was out in the country to tea last night. So I came as soon as I could this morning, did n't I? Mrs. Richardson thought it was a little too soon, did n't she? I hurried through breakfast. Mamma said it was too early to come over; but papa laughed at my impatience, and when he was laughing out I ran; and here I am, here I am, here I am!"



She sang the last words as if they were three lines of a song. She had rattled all her words off as fast as they could possibly come one after another, and seemed to love to hear the sound of her own voice. Although she threw many little questions in among her various remarks, she never stopped for Linda to answer, but only seemed to wish to be allowed to do all the talking.

"Come, Magpie, you have chattered enough," said auntie, as she came to bid her little niece good-morning. "I am going to take you down stairs, and Linda will follow when she is ready; then you shall have a second breakfast with her."

Linda heard Jinnie still chattering all the way down stairs, and the loud tones did not cease one moment after auntie had taken her into the parlor.

Linda was glad to finish her dressing by herself; and she closed her door to shut out Jinnie's voice while she knelt down to ask her Heavenly Father to bless and keep her through the day.

The breakfast bell rang, and when she got down Jinnie was already at the table looking eagerly at a hot muffin.

"Hurry, hurry, Linda," she said, "the muffins will be cold."

"No one would imagine that you had had one breakfast already," said auntie.

"I did n't have much of a one," said Jinnie, "but

I wanted to see Linda so much that I didn't care. Now I've seen her I can eat. I'm glad I saw her real early, and I'm glad I saw her up stairs, aren't you, Linda? I feel as if we knew each other better now that I've been up in your room while you were dressing, don't you, Linda? We're going to be as intimate as you and my mamma, did you know it, Mrs. Richardson? Linda's going to sit by me in school perhaps, if Daisy Webster'll sit somewhere else; wont that be nice, Linda? Are you in Fourth Reader? or do you read in History? I used to read in the Book of Nature. There's the clock striking eight. School will begin in an hour. Do you feel afraid, Linda?"

The last question was the only one that received an answer, for she had not paused a moment after one of the others to give auntie or Linda an opportunity to speak. But she was obliged to stop at last in order to give a little attention to her muffins.

"I don't believe I'll be afraid with you, Jinnie," said Linda.

"No, indeed," said auntie, laughing. "Jinnie is quite capable of taking you safely through the first day, Linda, you need fear nothing under her wing."

When at last the moment came to enter the schoolroom, Linda clutched Jinnie's hand and felt glad of such a friend. There were girls on the path, girls on the steps, girls in the hall, girls in the schoolroom; there

was no end to them anywhere, it seemed to Linda; and of course they all wanted to see the new scholar, and it was not at all pleasant to feel so many strange eyes watching her.

But Jinnie did not linger a moment anywhere. She cleared her way through all the groups, and dragging Linda by the hand, marched briskly through hall and schoolroom straight to the teacher's desk.

"What shall I tell her your name is?" she whispered quickly, just before they reached Miss Davies. Not waiting for an answer, as usual, she said, "I wont tell her it is Belinda. Linda sounds better."

"Good morning, Miss Davis. This is Linda Barto."

"Oh, Mrs. Richardson's little niece. I am glad to see you, my dear," said Miss Davies.

"Is Daisy Webster here?" said Jinnie. "I want to ask her if she will let Linda sit by me. May I, Miss Davies? Linda would like to stay with me until she gets acquainted with the other girls; would n't you, Linda? Besides, I want her to sit by me, because we're going to be intimate friends, like her auntie and my mamma, Miss Davies. Besides—"

"Never mind about any more reasons, Jinnie," said Miss Davies. "We must find Daisy at once, for it is almost nine."

"You stay right by Miss Davies, Linda. She'll take care of you till I come back," said Jinnie, as she flew away.

Jinnie's absence gave Linda an opportunity to become acquainted with her new teacher; and when she returned she said that she had made satisfactory arrangements with Daisy, and ushered Linda to her seat in a retired corner.

From that sheltered post of observation Linda could see as well as be seen; and when her protector fluttered into the seat beside her, and began to tell her the names of the different girls, with some interesting little bit of information about each one, Linda really forgot, in observing them all, that she was being observed.

Auntie could not have chosen a better friend to pilot Linda through the perils of those first days at school; and Linda clung gratefully to Jinnie's protection. She was very unlike the children Linda had always known: she was constantly startling her, she often teased her and sometimes offended her by her abrupt ways and words; but she was a child, with a child's heart; and the lonely little heart turned lovingly to any other, and sought sympathy where it seemed most natural to find it.

Jinnie was of her own age. Jinnie had a dear mother; and she must be able to understand what it was for a little girl to be separated by miles and miles of land from her mother. Linda longed to talk her troubles over with her new friend, and be comforted by sympathetic tears and caresses.

It seemed as if her heart would break sometimes,

for every day her longing for home increased, and every evening the little parlor seemed lonelier, the stillness more oppressive, and the going to bed without mamma more cruel.

Linda could not have borne it at all except for the comfort which she received from the thought that the Good Shepherd's love was around her. Every night she went to sleep, at last, hushed by that thought. Her own psalm, as she called the twenty-third, was repeated so often that sometimes, when she sat idle for a moment, the words began to say themselves, and she was unconscious of what she said till she had almost reached the end. It never lost its power to help her; but she needed help more and more as the days went on.

She wrote home almost every day, and had always the same brave story to tell mamma. After receiving mamma's reply to her first letter, and learning how much pleasure it had given her to know that her child was happy, Linda determined that mamma should never know she was unhappy.

Of course it was quite impossible for her to pour out her heart to auntie. How ungrateful it would be to tell her that she was not satisfied with all that she was doing for her. What an unkind reward for her kindness to tell her that the heart which ought to be quite happy had a miserable little ache shut up in it all the time. No, she must never let auntie know that she

was homesick any more than mamma. She could tell the story every night to her Heavenly Father, seek and find his comfort at any time; but it was natural that she should also long for human sympathy; and the only human being whom she could take into her confidence was Jinnie.

When Jinnie was saucy and mischievous; when she talked pages of nonsense at the most rapid rate; when she made fun of her new friend, buzzing about her and teasing her like a little wasp—then Linda felt that her secret must be buried for ever in her own heart.

But when Jinnie was impulsive only in her affection, when she loved her little friend best, called her Honey Bee, and told her she was the sweetest girl she knew, when her tones were gentle and her eyes soft, her dimples demure, and her smile loving instead of mocking, then Linda felt as if she could put her arms around her neck and whisper all the misery into her ear.

But day after day went by, and it was a week since she had left home. A week was a little thing, Linda used to think, running away all too quickly often; but this week—why, it was more like a month.

"Four weeks make a month," said Linda to herself; "three times four are twelve. I am to stay three months at least—twelve weeks just like this last one! O dear!"

She said "O dear!" aloud; and Jinnie, who was

walking home from school with her, put her arm around her waist, and said gently,

“What is the matter, Honey Bee?”

Linda had never quite reached that point where she could speak freely to Jinnie before. It seemed a little treacherous to auntie to confess that she was not happy; but her heart was very full to-day, and that one desolate week looked so dark behind her, those eleven desolate weeks so very dark before her, that she clung to this sunny little bit of friendship wedged in between them; she yielded to the comfort of Jinnie’s arm around her and Jinnie’s soft tones in her ear, and said,

“O Jinnie, did your heart ever feel as if it was going to break?”

“Oh, no,” said Jinnie. “I wish it did. Did yours?”

“You wouldn’t think it was so grand to have a heart breaking if you tried it once,” said Linda.

“I’d like to try, any way,” said Jinnie. “It sounds just like books.”

“But it hurts dreadfully,” said Linda.

“Oh, of course it does,” said Jinnie briskly. “That’s the way for it to do.”

“Well, never mind,” said Linda sadly. “I was going to tell you something, but I won’t.”

“Why not, dear?” said Jinnie, with that quick change from a mischievous to a sympathetic tone that was so charming.

"Perhaps I will," said Linda.

"Yes, do," said Jinnie. "Tell me what makes your heart ache."

"Did you ever go away from your mother, Jinnie?"

"Yes," said Jinnie.

"Far away?"

"I often go to the country to stay over night, or for a few days; and I have been to Uncle James'. I was there five weeks; but it didn't seem more than five days. Should you think it would, Linda, when I was having such a splendid time every minute? I had to go home. Wasn't it too bad? I wish I could have stayed five weeks longer; don't you? And last summer I went to Aunt Susan's for a fortnight, and I stayed all summer long. Wasn't that lovely? I think papa might have let me stay all winter. I felt dreadfully when I had to come home; so did auntie and uncle. Uncle said he would give me a pair of skates if I would stay. They have a Rink. Did you ever skate in a Rink, Linda? It is such fun. O dear! I wish I had stayed. Don't you think papa might have let me stay, Linda?"

"O Jinnie, didn't your heart ever ache for your mother when you were away?" said Linda.

"No," said Jinnie brightly. "How could my heart ache when I was having such a good time?"

"Did n't you miss her at night?"

"I could n't miss her when I was asleep, could I?"

"Did you go right to sleep the moment you got into bed? Didn't you ever lie awake and think?"

Jinnie laughed, and danced around in a little circle on the pavement in her mirth.

"O Linda," said she, "that reminds me of the funniest thing. They all called me Sleepy-head, and Uncle Arthur said he believed the sand-man was after me all day long, for I used to go to sleep wherever I was, just as soon as I got tired. Isn't that a comfortable way to do? And one day I went to sleep in church, and nearly tumbled off the seat; and some days I played so hard that when I sat down to rest a minute I'd go to sleep in my chair. But one day I'll tell you what happened. I always used to stay up at night just as long as auntie would let me. I used to coax and coax to stay a minute longer, so that by the time I went to bed I could hardly keep my eyes open. I would almost tumble down the stairs before I got to the top; and it was hard work to get undressed when I was so sleepy, should n't you think it would be, Linda? Well, one night I did n't even try to keep my eyes open when I was going up stairs. I just felt my way with my feet, and held on to the banister so that I would n't fall; and when I got up my head was bobbing around so that I did n't care whether I ever got undressed and went to bed—I only wanted to put my head down somewhere that very minute. Would n't you, Linda, if you had been so sleepy? There was a

lounge that stood across the corner of the hall, and I saw it; then I didn't remember anything more. But what do you think I did, Linda? I dropped down there and was asleep in a minute, and after a while I rolled off behind it, all wrapped up in the afghan, and there I stayed as still as a mouse. When auntie came up stairs there was no little girl in my bed. Shouldn't you think she would have been frightened? They hunted all over, and then they hunted in the neighbors' houses, and they looked around the garden; and if I hadn't bumped my head, perhaps they would have got ever so many men and gone out with lanterns to look through the woods, and perhaps they would have hunted in the river. Do you suppose they would, Linda? Wouldn't it have been fun, when I was safe in the corner all the time? But I bumped my head. It got under the lounge, and when I wanted to turn it over, bump it went against the lounge, and hurt me so that I woke right up. I couldn't think what was the matter. I wondered how I got into that funny little corner, and I looked at the afghan and my clothes; then I began to climb out; and when I saw the lamps were lighted and it was night, I remembered how I came up stairs to go to bed; and I began to laugh so that I ached with laughing by the time auntie heard me and ran up and found me."

When Jinnie finished her long story she was so overcome by the recollection of her funny experience

that Linda shared her merriment and laughed as heartily as she, almost forgetting how gloomily the conversation had begun.

But Jinnie wished to hear about the heartache.

"There, Linda," she said, "I have been talking all this time, and you've never told me your secret. When I begin to talk I keep on and on. Did you ever know such a tongue? But I'm going to stop now, because I want you to talk. Begin right away, and don't give me a chance to interrupt you, or I'll never hear the secret, and I long to know it."

"Jinnie," said Linda, "if your heart had been aching for your mother when it got dark and night came, you wouldn't have felt so sleepy. Heartaches keep people awake sometimes. I don't see how you could help missing your own mother once in a while."

"What was the use?" said Jinnie. "It would n't have brought her there. I love my mother dearly enough, I should hope. But that's no reason I should make myself feel badly when it would n't do a bit of good. I wouldn't be so silly; my mother would n't want me to."

"I know she would n't," said Linda, "only I don't see how you could help it."

"Linda!" said Jinnie sternly, and in a tone that expressed great disappointment, "is that all you were going to tell me? Is it that little bit of a thing that your heart aches about? I'd be ashamed! The idea

of getting homesick when you are having such a good time! I don't think your mother would approve of it at all."

"I'm sure she would n't," Linda answered meekly, resolving never to confide in any one again, but to keep her sorrows hidden from every human being during the dreary days of all the weeks that stretched before her.

CHAPTER XVI.

"LINDA BARTO!" said Miss Davies, for the third time during one school-hour.

Linda started just as she used to at home when mamma roused her from her dreams.

She heard a giggle which she had heard twice before that morning. Every time that Miss Davies spoke her name suddenly she started, and every time that she started Jinnie giggled.

"You will never learn your lesson by looking out of the window," said Miss Davies. "There is a time to dream, my dear, and a time to study."

Jinnie did not giggle this time, for the reason that she saw other girls inclined to do so. She might tease Linda herself; she considered it her privilege; but she would allow no one else to laugh at her. So Jinnie was to be seen scowling upon the giggling girls until they looked sufficiently grave, when she took advantage of her privilege as most intimate friend and giggled herself.

She tickled Linda's elbow and pointed at her and shook her head in a provoking manner. But when she saw the color mounting higher and higher in Linda's cheeks, and something moist and shining coming

down to meet the rising flush, she was very sorry that she had teased her. She tore a piece of paper out of the back of her book, and wrote,

"DARLING BEE: Do n't cry, or I will have a heartache like that one you told me about yesterday. I love you better than anybody almost. Of course I do n't mean my father and mother; but you are the nicest girl in school, only you make me think of 'Niobe all tears.' Do you know that story? I'll tell it to you at recess. You must get over being homesick; then you wont dream or have the blues. If you do n't dream, Miss Davies wont scold you; and if you do n't have the blues, I wont make fun of you; so there wont be any trouble if you stop being homesick. Never mind those girls. I wont let them laugh at you; and you must n't mind me, because I'm your most intimate friend.

"JINNIE MANSFIELD."

Linda could not quite see why their intimacy was any excuse for Jinnie's tormenting her. It seemed sometimes as if everybody liked to tease her. Even papa did. He used to say that he could not help it, she took things so seriously. That must be the reason, because she took things seriously. But papa never made her angry. She always felt that there was love in his most mocking words. Love took the sting out of everything, thought Linda; and one who had enough of that ought not to miss anything else. If

she could only go home to the wealth of love she had left, she would know how to value it, she believed, and never waste any time desiring smaller things and fancying they could satisfy her. But Jinnie said she loved her. Perhaps she ought to believe it, even if she could not feel it at present. At least she might forgive her.

So she looked around with a pardoning smile; then Jinnie pointed at Miss Davies and at Linda's book, warning her to dream no more.

"It is a kind warning," reflected Linda; and then she began to appreciate the kindness in Jinnie's note. Was it not true that her homesickness was the cause of her blues and her dreaming, of Jinnie's teasing and Miss Davies' rebuke? Linda's cheeks burned with shame when she thought of that public rebuke; for although Miss Davies had called her out of her dreams often before, this was the first speech she had made on the subject.

Linda knew that she deserved it. She had wasted a great deal of time during this first week of school looking out of the window and seeing visions of home, instead of improving the opportunities which she used to long for when she was there.

And it was the very thing which she had resolved every night not to do. It was much easier to make good resolutions in her own little room in the evening than to carry them out at school in the daytime. But now she determined that she would begin to act. Miss

Davies' rebuke and Jinnie's note had fairly roused her to the knowledge that she had only been dreaming her duty, not doing it, all this time.

For the rest of the hour Linda studied so hard, driving away every thought not connected with her lesson, that Miss Davies was very much pleased, and praised not only her diligence, but the recitation which followed.

"You have not had such a good lesson since you came, my dear," she said; "and I am sure you could always have them if you would try. I expect you to be one of my best scholars."

"I am going to study hard after this," said Linda.

"And dream a little less," said Miss Davies with a smile, as she put her hand on the bell to ring it for recess.

"Come, Honey Bee," said Jinnie.

"O Jinnie," said Linda, "as they twined their arms about each other's waists, "do n't forget to tell me what you meant by 'Niobe all tears.'"

"It's a wonder that I know and you do n't," said Jinnie. "You always know all the stories in history and mythology."

"I've heard of Niobe, but I do n't know what she did."

"She cried," said Jinnie. Her husband and fourteen children were killed; and she cried tears enough for the whole fifteen. Just think of that! Then she

was turned into a rock (it is n't a true story, Linda) but she could n't stop crying; so a stream came pouring out of the rock and poured and poured for ever. You wont be 'Linda all tears,' will you? You wont be homesick for ever, will you, so that the tears keep coming? I wont have you like Niobe! I'll make you laugh whether you want to or not."

Linda laughed out very naturally at Jinnie's words.

"Some of the girls are afraid of you; they think you are so sober," said Jinnie. "I never was afraid of you, not even that first moment I saw you, when you gave me such a solemn look for peeping into your room before you were dressed. I'm not afraid of anything! I told the girls this morning that you were homesick, and that you'd get over it before long; and I told them how splendidly you could jump rope. I said you could do 'hot peppers' better than any one I knew. They all want to see you. Come along, and we'll borrow Fanny Stacy's rope. I told the girls you were more afraid of them than they were of you."

Linda was going to draw back, being rather shy about displaying her accomplishments in public.

"The sooner you get over being afraid of each other the better," said Jinnie; and Linda, feeling the wisdom of her words, allowed herself to be drawn along.

They were playing "Going to school." Daisy Webster and Dora King were turning the rope; and

one after another the little girls jumped through it. Each seemed anxious not to get there last; but there was not exactly a struggle to be first; no one pushed another aside, though all were on the alert for an opportunity to skip into line as quickly as possible. But some sort of order prevailed until Jinnie came.

All had gone to school but four when she and Linda appeared. She had no idea of being the last arrival, nor of having her friend left behind either. So she dashed at the little waiting company of four, dragging Linda by the hand; she pushed one aside and then another; and they hardly knew that she was there when she had jumped the rope and gone to school, leaving the other girls behind to gaze at her in astonishment.

"Come on, Linda!" she shouted, dancing up and down, and throwing her long arms about in the air like a windmill. "Hurry! hurry! hurry! why don't you come? You'll be the next at school if you come on."

She had dragged Linda with her and left her nearest the rope as she jumped through it, but no sooner did Linda recover from her surprise than she stepped back and said, "It is your turn, Minnie."

A murmur immediately began to rise throughout the multitude. No one had murmured at Jinnie before, because it was generally understood that Jinnie Mansfield was to have her own way. She was a privileged

character; and though many of her freaks were not pleasant, yet so many of them were generous and charming that they seemed an excuse for those which were otherwise. People bore a great deal from Jinnie because she made them love her even while she was teasing them.

If Linda had followed Jinnie and said nothing, her present freak would only have been noticed by a few contemptuous looks, which, as they were neither blows nor words, would not have hurt Jinnie particularly.

But there seemed to all of the girls a rebuke in Linda's action and words, though she intended nothing of the kind. She only followed her first impulse. It was as natural for her to give up the place which did not belong to her as it had been for Jinnie to claim it.

None of the girls were sorry that Jinnie had received the rebuke she deserved and which they would not have dared administer. But if this new friend who, as Jinnie had confided to the school, loved her like a sister, if this dear friend, quiet and timid as she seemed, could rebuke Jinnie Mansfield publicly, certainly the rest might uphold her in it. They were not sorry for such an opportunity to express their opinion.

"It was my turn, Jinnie Mansfield," said Minnie Barry.

"You ought to have waited till we four had jumped," said Katie Crow.

"You nearly pushed me over," said Janie Crane.

"You are very rude," said Fanny Fothergill.

"If I'd seen you a minute sooner I'd have stopped the rope," said Daisy Webster.

"So would I," said Dora King.

Instead of replying to the host of adversaries suddenly risen up against her, Jinnie turned with flaming cheeks and flashing eyes toward Linda. She understood why the girls who had not dared attack her before dared now.

"Why didn't you jump when I told you to?" she demanded.

"It wasn't my turn," said Linda.

"I s'pose you mean to say it wasn't mine," said Jinnie, walking away indignantly.

A little laugh followed her departure: but Linda did not laugh. She ran after Jinnie with a very troubled face.

"O Jinnie, are you angry?" she said. "I didn't mean to make you angry."

"You had better go back to your friends," said Jinnie scornfully.

"Let her alone," said Daisy Webster, who had been the most intimate friend before Linda came, and understood Jinnie well. "She will be over it in a few minutes. We are going to have Jacob's Ladder next. Now, Linda, we will see how you jump. We have all heard about your jumping."

"That's a very embarrassing thing to tell her," said Fanny Fothergill. "Of course she'll make mistakes after that."

"I'll try what I can do," said Linda, laughing and blushing; "but I'm afraid I won't do very well now that I know you expect me to."

CHAPTER XVII.

AT first they turned the rope so near the ground that it was difficult to make a mistake, yet Linda's feet tripped. But the girls seemed to understand why, and did not put her out for it.

As she began to recover from her embarrassment they lifted the rope higher; and when they saw that she was becoming absorbed in the game and forgetting them, they gave harder and harder tests to the little feet which jumped so lightly and so truly.

She was supposed to be mounting the rounds of an invisible ladder, and in accordance with the rules of the game, the rope went higher for each jump—higher and higher, till Linda sprang so far from the ground that the girls held their breath, and the hands that turned the rope had to make an effort to be steady. Up she sprang again and again, with a pretty, airy motion, keeping as perfect time as if she were moved by machinery.

"She looks like a fairy," thought Jinnie, peeping at her from behind a tree, and in her excitement forgetting her anger. "She could almost fly, I do believe."

Linda's hair was shaken into disorder, her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes looked fixedly beyond the girls and seemed to see nothing near.

"She's a queer girl," reflected Jinnie. "I wonder what she's looking at. Hope she does n't see me; but she does n't look as if she saw anything."

"I never knew any one make such a high ladder," whispered Daisy to Fanny.

"She'll never get up another round," thought Jinnie.

But the next spring took Linda still higher.

"It's enough to kill her," reflected Jinnie. "Somebody ought to stop her."

But still another spring carried Linda to a height which called forth a murmur of applause from the spectators.

Jinnie saw how the color was deepening in Linda's cheeks, and how she began to catch her breath.

"It is very dangerous," thought she. "Why do n't they stop her?"

Instead of that a little clamor arose, urging her to even greater efforts.

"I can't speak to her, not if she kills herself," thought Jinnie, really distressed, as she saw that Linda in her enthusiasm was straining every nerve to its utmost. "I'll have to let her jump on if she goes to the tree-tops and bursts her bloodvessels; but I should think those new friends of hers might save her life for her."

But at last, after a great leap and a roar of applause, Linda did stop, with her hand on her side and her

breath going and coming at altogether too rapid a rate. She dropped down on the grass; somebody offered her a large hat for a fan; and she received the girls' praises silently, as she sat and recovered her strength for another exploit.

"What a fuss they are making over her," thought Jinnie. "They're not afraid of each other any longer; they are all the best of friends now, and *I* did it. I told the girls how splendidly she jumped, and how sweet she was, and how much I loved her. I took her over there to jump rope and to make friends with the girls; and there she is with all of them praising and petting her; and here I am, all alone, hiding behind a tree. That is just the way things go. I'll never do anything for anybody again. I never saw anything so ungrateful as some people I know. She needn't talk at me in that goody way. She needn't put on such airs before all the girls. She needn't think she's so much better than I am. I'll never forgive her. I won't have her for my most intimate friend any more. I'll have Daisy Webster again. I don't care for her."

But Jinnie found Linda worth watching as she rose and went towards the rope.

"Oh, they're only going to rock the cradle," said Jinnie. "I'm glad they know enough not to try 'Hot Peppers' now she's so tired with 'Jacob's Ladder.'"

In "Rock the Cradle" they swang the rope back and forth near the ground, not throwing it over Linda's

head at all, so that she gave satisfaction without any great exertion.

They tried "High Waters" next; and after a moment's rest, it was Linda whom they called out again.

"Not another girl jumping this recess," said Jinnie. "You'd think she was the only girl in school. I never saw anything like it."

"High Waters" required more skill both on the part of those who turned the rope and those who jumped it, for it must always escape the ground, and it was hard for rope and feet not to become entangled in such circumstances. However, the rope swung around and around, just escaping the ground, as long as Linda cared to follow it.

Once more she paused suddenly, with her hand on her side and her breath coming and going too fast.

"Now I hope she's through," reflected Jinnie. "I don't know what her aunt would say if she could see her. She wouldn't think I was taking very good care of her."

But no one else seemed inclined to try "High Waters," although Linda declared she was too tired to jump any more.

"I'm glad she knows enough to know she's tired," said Jinnie.

"Who wants to jump next? Linda is tired," said Janie Crane.

"O Linda, could n't you just give us 'Hot Pep-

pers'?" said Fanny. "That is the very thing Jinnie was telling us about. She said you did it so splendidly."

"Oh yes, Linda, do try Hot Peppers," said Dora King.

"Well, it'll kill her if she does, that's all," thought Jinnie, in despair.

"Somebody else ought to jump now," said Linda.

But she was recovering her breath and her ambition; she was not unwilling to try Hot Peppers if they should urge her.

"The bell will ring before long," said Minnie Barry. "Wont you, please, Linda? You're the best jumper I ever saw."

That was enough for Linda. She had won so many laurels that she longed for still more. She would not mind that little warning hammer going at such a rapid rate in her left side; she would not mind that her cheeks burned and her feet ached; she would show the girls what she could do; she would win the fame for which her heart yearned.

It was a long time since she had tasted the pleasures of fame. She could not remember having just this same feeling since a day last summer when she read a poem on "Death" to Polly, and Polly shed tears. This was not as lofty a renown as that to which she had been accustomed, of course. One would rather receive the tribute of a silent tear for the labor of

one's brain than mere noisy applause for victories won by agile feet. But, after all, glory is glory; and Linda was very glad to take what she could get in that way.

She marched forth from her seat under the tree like the conqueror of armies, eager for her next battlefield and triumph. If she remembered a warning of her mother's against an old temptation of hers to jump too long and too violently, she had gone so far now that she could not stop to heed it. Perhaps the very fear that she might heed it before she had won her laurels quickened her footsteps.

Jinnie had been seated comfortably, curled into a very small heap behind the tree, with her skirts tucked tightly under her feet, so that they should not betray her hiding-place. But when Linda began to jump again she rose, and did not stop to think whether she was seen or not. She had risen with some idea of going to Linda, reminding her that she was under her charge during her aunt's absence, and forbidding her to jump another moment. But no sooner was she on her feet than she realized that it was impossible to do anything of the sort.

"I can't go there and speak to her now we're enemies," reflected Jinnie; "but if I were her friend, as those girls pretend to be, I would n't let her jump another moment. Her face is dreadfully red, and she can hardly get her breath. O dear! I wish the bell would ring, so that she'd have to stop."

But the bell did not ring, and Linda was performing marvellous feats of swiftness. If there had really been hot peppers on the ground burning her toes as she touched them, she could hardly have lifted her feet more quickly and jumped more rapidly. The rope flew around at such speed that one could hardly tell that it was a rope.

All the girls were wondering and admiring. Linda was catching her breath, but growing more eager and ambitious, when suddenly a gruff voice startled performer and spectators.

"I heard of a girl dying of hot peppers," said the voice. "She dropped dead in a minute."

Jinnie looked as stern and solemn as if she were expecting the tragedy to be repeated on their play-ground.

Somebody was going to be frightened and beg Linda to stop, but just then somebody else began to laugh, and in a moment all the girls were laughing.

Linda stopped jumping; and though the girls begged her to go on, when she saw Jinnie going away more angry than she had been before, she ran after her.

But she was repulsed again.

"I should think you would know better than to jump so long," said Jinnie. "What would your aunt say? You can hardly get your breath. I wouldn't have spoken to you, only I couldn't stand there and

see you killing yourself. Before I knew it I ran out and told you about that girl. My aunt Jane said a cousin of her cousin's told her it was true, too."

"I know I ought not to have jumped so long," said Linda, gasping for breath and pressing her hand to her side. "Mamma never likes to have me. It was very kind of you to stop me, Jinnie."

"All the thanks I get for doing anything for you is to have your friends laugh at me," said Jinnie gruffly.

"I didn't laugh at you," said Linda; "and the girls are all your friends a thousand times more than mine, so I should n't think you'd mind."

"They're as much your friends as ever they were mine," said Jinnie. "I heard them all praising you, and saw how you smiled at each other as if you'd been intimate for ever. They knew how intimate I was with you, and of course they thought you didn't like me any more when you snubbed me before them all."

"I snubbed you?" said Linda.

"Oh, did n't you tell Minnie it was her turn, after I'd taken the trouble to get you in first?"

"Well, it was her turn," said Linda; "and I never thought of such a thing as snubbing you. I didn't think anything about it anyway. I couldn't have jumped before Minnie—that's all there is of it; and I think you're very disagreeable, Jinnie. You're just trying to quarrel."

"Oh, well," said Jinnie, "if you don't want to be intimate friends any more, I don't care."

They had been walking towards the schoolhouse all this time, as the bell had rung for recess to come to an end. The girls who were following thought there must have been a reconciliation, until at the door they saw Jinnie toss her head, shrug her shoulders, and walk away.

"Never mind," whispered Daisy to Linda. "She'll get over it soon." —

CHAPTER XVIII.

BUT Linda did mind Jinnie's coolness when it lasted all through that day and the next, and seemed as if it was going to last for ever. Jinnie had seen her mistake long ago; she knew that Linda had not meant to rebuke her, as soon as her anger cooled. But she was too proud to acknowledge how angry and unreasonable she had been. Besides, Linda had so many new friends that Jinnie said to herself perhaps Linda did not care for her any more; perhaps she did not miss the old friend now. Linda had been repulsed twice when she tried to be reconciled, so she did not make a third attempt; and the pride on both sides kept the friends apart for several days.

Meanwhile Jinnie had become intimate with Daisy again, and Linda had many friends. Her gentle ways attracted the girls, and she seemed to have plunged into familiar acquaintance with them all on the day when she first jumped rope.

Since that day everything had gone well with Linda, except where Jinnie was concerned. She had quite overcome her tendency to dream in school. At first she had a few hard battles; but now she was so interested in her lessons that she did not even care to

dream. She longed to know what was coming next in her books, and would sometimes have made herself ill learning lessons for two or three successive days if auntie and Miss Davies had not interfered. She was becoming interested in her music, too, and growing fonder of auntie all the time; so that if little things had not sometimes overwhelmed her suddenly and made her heart ache for those she loved best, she would have thought that she was conquering her homesickness very well.

But they were much better days than the first in the new life and strange country. Every morning Linda could say with greater faith, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me;" and every evening she thanked the Good Shepherd more sincerely for his kind care of the stray lamb that day. She liked to think of her Heavenly Father as the Good Shepherd in whose fold she was safe; she liked to think of all the pleasant things which happened to her during the day as still waters by which he led her, and of the rest and peace that came to her heart at night as the green pastures in which he bade her lie down.

By the still waters and in the green pastures Linda learned to say from her own experience, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want;" for those wants which she had thought so many and so great on the first dreary night away from home, were being supplied—except one that must always ache until she put her

arms around her mother's neck again. Nothing else could quite cure the pain of that longing. Every evening must bring back wistful thoughts of home. She must always wonder, as the darkness came, who was putting Polly to bed and singing baby's restlessness away, who was telling Tommy a story, who was running to wait on tired mamma and bringing papa his slippers.

Only a return to the fold could give the little wanderer perfect rest; and yet in her wanderings she had found a treasure. It was the very want which remained unsatisfied that had brought her the greatest blessing. She never knew how God could comfort a lonely little heart until her own grew lonely; it was not until she missed the love on which she had always leaned that her Lord's love seemed real and near to her like her mother's; not until she left her pleasant pastures that she found the peace and comfort always abiding in his larger fold.

She was reading in the parlor one evening when she came to the verse,

“Oh, little child, be still and rest—
 He sweetly sleeps
 Whom Jesus keeps—
And in the morning wake so blest,
 His child to be.
Love every one, but love him best;
 He first loved thee.”

Linda knew the truth of the words from her own sweet sleep and happy wakings, and she repeated the verse till she had learned it. She thought she would like to say it sometimes at night, and that it would be well to remember the last two lines at any time. Now that she had learned to love her Heavenly Father in the same way that she loved those friends whom she could see, she wanted him always to seem like a real person to her; she hoped he would never seem far off again, and that she should love him best who was her first and best friend.

She was repeating the last two lines again, as a sort of charge to her heart, when auntie saw her lips moving.

"Are you studying?" she said. "That is forbidden."

"I was only learning a little verse," said Linda.

"I hope it is a very little one," said auntie; "for I know you have all your lessons for to-morrow, and you have studied quite enough to-night."

"Here it is," said Linda, giving auntie the book.

"It is a pretty verse, isn't it?" said auntie.

"Yes," said Linda. "I thought I would like to know it to say sometimes at night. Those things put me to sleep sometimes when I get thinking and lie awake."

"Why, you talk like an old woman," said auntie. "I didn't know that little girls without any cares or

troubles ever lay awake. I supposed that they went to sleep as easily as the birds and chickens. How long do you toss on your pillow, my darling, and what do you think about?"

"I think about mamma and home," said Linda.

She had never come so near making a confession of her homesickness before.

"That looks rather suspicious," said auntie. "I'm afraid your heart is all left behind you, Linda."

"No, not all of it," said Linda.

"Did you bring a little bit for auntie?"

"Indeed I did—a good big piece," said Linda, throwing her arms around her neck.

"You like it here better than you did at first, don't you, darling?" said auntie.

"I love you dearly," said Linda, "and I love the girls and the school and my lessons and my music."

"I am so glad you are contented," said auntie, looking straight into Linda's eyes, with a gratified smile.

She saw nothing in the little girl's eyes to contradict her words, nothing which could betray that she was not contented, although a moment ago Linda had been ready to confess the truth.

She had said that she loved auntie and the girls and the school; but auntie had spoken just in time to prevent Linda's also telling her that she loved her own mamma better than all, and that if she did not mind

she would like to give up every new pleasure to go back to the dear old life at home.

Often since auntie and Linda had grown to be on such fond and familiar terms, Linda had felt tempted to open her heart. It was as easy now to talk freely to auntie as to Jinnie, or any little girl of her own age; and when evening brought visions of home and a heartache, she felt as if she could pour out the story of her discontent, of her longings, that would return with the darkness; as if she could bear to be laughed at, perhaps despised a little, if only auntie would give her permission to go home.

But in the morning she was sure to be ashamed of the weakness which had so nearly overcome her; she could see then how ungrateful her confession would have seemed; and she always determined to be quite happy in return for the kindness she received.

It was evening now, however, and with her arms around auntie's neck she had never been so near telling her the secret. But when auntie turned toward her with such a happy look, saying she was glad she was contented, Linda resolved again to conquer her discontent, or else keep it hidden bravely from those loving eyes searching her face for the truth.

"Did you ever lie awake at home?" said auntie.

"Sometimes," said Linda.

"But you didn't have mamma to miss and think about then."

"No," said Linda, laughing; "but I used to miss other things. I used to wish I could go to school and take music lessons, and have plenty of time to read and to write poetry."

"And now that you have all the things you used to want, you want all the things you used to have."

"Yes," said Linda, thinking that here was another opportunity to confess.

In the stillness of the little parlor she could almost hear the merry shouts of the children's voices at home. In the lonely room she could almost feel them around her again; she could remember what it was to be as merry as the rest, and have no burden hidden away in the corner of her heart.

Should she tell auntie that the things she used to have were worth more than all the things she used to want? that love with nothing else was worth more than everything else without love? Should she confess that she had grown wise under her roof, and learned that books, music, and hosts of new friends were of less value than the blessing of a mother's presence?

No, she was still determined to keep her secret; but she might have suspected that auntie, in her long experience, had learned some of the wise truths which she was just discovering; and if she had read aright the face watching hers, she might also have suspected that auntie knew more of her heart than she had been told.

"It is a good thing to have contentment everywhere; isn't it, Linda?" said auntie.

"Yes," said Linda's lips. "Yes," said her heart, "it is a good thing to have contentment; and I must make the best of what I have, and not want what I can't have any more. I *will* be contented; or if I can't, I will never tell anybody. I will never, never speak of it except when I say my prayers."

With that resolve Linda drew nearer in heart to the only Friend who should ever hear her secret.

"I used to dream, too, at night," she said, pursuing the same subject on which they had been talking—"I mean before I went to sleep. I used to lie awake and dream that I went to school, and played beautiful music on the piano, and that I had a big room full of books, and could sit and read a long time without any one to disturb me. Then I used to dream that I had a microscope, and could see everything in the flowers and water; and I used to find the loveliest things you ever heard of—little worlds with people in them; and one time I thought I found a great big wood, full of flowers and trees and fountains and fairies and mermaids, all in a piece of moss. That dream began when I was awake, and ended when I was asleep, for I thought it was all true about the fairies and mermaids. Oh, you don't know how lovely it was, auntie."

"Dreams are sometimes lovelier than realities," said auntie. "People often have reason to be sorry

when their dreams come true. It quite spoils them, Linda."

"Oh, I wonder if she can mean me," thought Linda.

"You saw all those things through a piece of glass that you only thought you saw," said auntie. "There was no glass at all."

"No," said Linda.

"What a gift such an imagination is to a little girl," said auntie. "When you were wishing for the microscope I wonder if you ever thought of being thankful for the imagination that could give you so much pleasure without it."

"I don't believe I ever did," said Linda. "I was always thinking how much better the real thing would be."

"So all your dreams have come true except that one," said auntie. "You have the school, the music, the books, the quiet and leisure, everything but the microscope."

"I used to dream of fame too," said Linda.

"Fame?" said auntie, with a laugh.

"Oh, yes, I cared more for that than for anything else. I used to write poetry, you know, auntie."

"Did you, indeed?" said auntie. "No, I didn't know it. I must confess my ignorance with shame. How is it that I have never seen any of your poems? I might have been proud of my namesake."

"That sounds like papa. You are making fun," said Linda, pinching her cheek.

"Well, tell me about the poetry and those dearest dreams. What did you write about?"

"About 'Life,' and 'The Stars,' and 'A Dead Chicken,' and 'Death,' and 'Disappointment,' and 'My Pretty Plaything'—oh, ever so many more. Those are just a few."

"And you used to think you would like to be great?"

"Yes," said Linda. "I would love to have everybody read what I wrote, and praise me. I would like to make people cry—"

"Why, what a little savage!"

"Oh, the tears would n't hurt," said Linda. "I like to cry over lovely things in books. It is n't a bit like crying for things that really happen."

"Isn't it?" said auntie.

"And I would make them laugh too; but I'd rather make them cry. Oh, I wish I could be famous. But I'm afraid I've lost my gift, auntie. I never write any more poetry. I don't know why I've stopped dreaming it. It never comes into my head now."

"Perhaps it will some day," said auntie. "Perhaps the microscope and the fame will both come to you. Then your dreams will all be fulfilled. What shall you do after that? You will have to begin and dream some new ones."

"If she only guessed the new one that I dream all the time," thought Linda. "If she only knew that my best dream—and the very best I ever had in my life—is to see mamma again! Oh, how I would jump across the room if I saw her coming in that door! Oh, what a hug I would give her!"

"You will have an opportunity to become famous when you begin to write compositions," said auntie.

"I have never written prose," said Linda. "I'm afraid I can't do it at all."

"I fancy I shall like you better in prose than in poetry," said auntie.

"You're laughing at me, I know you are," said Linda.

"The sand man has been after you for the last ten minutes," said auntie. "Those eyelids can hardly hold themselves up. I prophesy that you won't lie awake to-night. Now kiss me and go."

But, although Linda was very sleepy, no sooner was her head on the pillow than she began to think. She remembered the new verse she had learned, and was soon losing all consciousness of home and homesickness as she repeated the words,

"'Oh, little child, be still and rest—
He sweetly sleeps
Whom Jesus keeps.'"

CHAPTER XIX.

"I don't care," said Linda to auntie at breakfast; "if Jinnie does n't want to make up, she need n't."

"I wonder why she does n't forgive and forget," said auntie. "It would be like her."

"She knows I didn't mean to do anything that day," said Linda, "only she is too proud to say so."

"Are you sure you are not a little proud too?" said auntie.

On the way to school Linda thought of auntie's question, and wondered if she could be at all to blame for the coolness between herself and her friend. No one had suggested it to her before, and she had heard so much about "Jinnie's freaks," that it had not occurred to her she herself could be wrong.

It was a rainy morning, and she was walking to school under a little silk umbrella which auntie had given her a few days before.

"School is a very bad place for umbrellas," auntie had said; "so I will embroider your initials inside, and perhaps if it gets lost it will come back to you."

Linda's thoughts had gone from her quarrel with Jinnie to the pretty scarlet initials B. B. which were just in a line with her eyes. She was admiring the

rustic pattern in which they were worked when she heard a familiar voice startling her as usual with its abrupt greeting and loud tones.

"Wont you put your umbrella down and come under mine, Jinnie, so that we can walk together?" said Linda in a very friendly manner. She was thinking of auntie's question, and felt conscious that she had worn rather a proud and injured air with Jinnie of late.

Jinnie immediately accepted the invitation; but she was hardly under Linda's umbrella when she saw Daisy Webster's coming around the corner.

"Oh, there's Daisy!" she said, and without another word jumped out into the rain, and ran to Daisy for shelter.

"Good-morning, Linda," said Daisy. "Come the other side of me, and we'll all walk together."

"No, there isn't room for another," said Linda rather haughtily.

"She's mad," said Jinnie in one of her loud whispers. "Jealous!"

"What a very disagreeable girl she is!" thought Linda, fastening her eyes on the scarlet initials again.

But she could see the two friends quite as plainly as she saw the letters. She could see them whispering, with their arms around each other, holding the umbrella together, and behaving in every way like most intimate friends.

She did not hear Daisy saying, "I don't think you are very nice to her, Jinnie," and Jinnie replying "She is n't nice to me, that's the reason. She's so stiff and airy all the time that I do n't know how to make up."

Perhaps if she had known just what they were saying she could have helped Jinnie to make up immediately; but she imagined that they were renewing their old intimacy, with the intention of leaving her out in the cold; and became more dignified than before.

"Wont you come and walk with us, Linda?" asked Daisy again.

"No, thank you," said Linda.

"She is such a sweet little girl," whispered Daisy; "but she does seem rather stiff to you."

"They're talking about me; but I don't care," thought Linda.

"Oh, everybody thinks she's so sweet," said Jinnie. "I'm getting tired of hearing how sweet she is. I wish she'd try being sweet to me."

"You ought to make up," said Daisy gravely. "It is very wrong for two such friends not to have a reconciliation. Do you remember the quarrel we had once, Jinnie?"

"Do n't I?" said Jinnie. "That's the biggest one I ever had in my life. How we screamed at each other!"

"And slapped," said Daisy.

"And stamped our feet and called names."

"But we made it up in half an hour."

"We had a lovely reconciliation," said Jinnie with a sigh.

"It is so easy to make up a big, noisy fight," said Daisy.

"And so hard to make up a little still one like Linda's and mine," said Jinnie.

"But then it can be done," said Daisy; "and ought to be brought about in some way. Suppose I could manage to reconcile you. Oh what fun!"

If Linda could only have overheard the conversation her face would have been all smiles and peace at the schoolroom door. But instead of imagining that Jinnie's old friend was generously trying to reconcile her to the new, Linda firmly believed that Daisy was trying to win her way back to that first place in Jinnie's affections from which she had driven her.

She looked so proud and stately when they turned to go into the schoolhouse that even Daisy felt provoked, and did not think she was quite the sweetest girl she had ever known.

It was impossible for Jinnie to resist teasing Linda when she was in one of her serious moods; and although she longed to be reconciled now, this extreme dignity was too much for her.

It happened that both umbrellas tried to close at the same time on the schoolhouse steps, and that

instead of either one succeeding the two knocked together and nearly flew out of their owners' hands.

"What a nice umbrella," said Daisy to Linda.

"With your initials worked on it," said Jinnie.

"B. B. I thought your name was just Linda," said Daisy. "Is there more of it?"

Linda had become rather sensitive on the subject of her old-fashioned name since Jinnie made fun of it, and she was in just the mood now, to suspect Daisy of alluding to it deliberately; so she answered nothing.

"What's the matter, Linda?" said Daisy. "Are you mad at me?"

"She does n't want to tell you her name," answered Jinnie.

"My name is Belinda Barto," came in a stately manner from a very queenly little person who was taking off her hat in the corner of the cloak-room.

"'My name is Norval,'" recited Jinnie with much pomposity, "'on the Grampian hills my father feeds his flock.'"

Daisy was just enough annoyed not to interfere. She would have checked Jinnie if she had not thought the queen needed taking down.

"B. B. stands for Busy Bee," said Jinnie, examining Linda's umbrella, "or buzzing bee, or biting bee, I do n't know which. Why do n't you say something horrid, Linda, instead of looking at me as if you thought I was a worm?"

Linda neither said anything nor looked at any one after that. She went directly to the schoolroom, with a turmoil of grief and anger in her heart which she was very wise not to put into words.

"There," said Jinnie, "everything worse than ever! If she'd only talk things out, or fight them out, like other people, we might get over them. But now I suppose it'll go on for ever."

"What made you tease her? it's all your own fault," said Daisy, rather regretting she had not improved her opportunity to make peace.

"Oh, everything's always my own fault," said Jinnie, sighing. "I can't help being horrid."

Linda did not look up when Jinnie came in and sat down beside her. She had opened her arithmetic to study the rules once more before recitation, and her lips were buzzing over the words so rapidly that Jinnie could not help thinking of a busy bee.

"You're the only girl studying in the room," said she, with kind intentions. "Let's play tit-tat-too till the bell rings, Linda. You'll kill yourself studying so hard."

Linda had not recovered from the scene in the cloak-room as quickly as Jinnie; it was impossible for her to speak quite naturally and pleasantly; so she did not speak at all, but kept buzzing over a rule.

"How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour,"

sang Jinnie, in a funny, drawling tone that made all the girls laugh.

The laughter was good-natured, but it hurt Linda, and she kept her eyes fastened on the book and her lips moving.

"I don't believe she heard a word we're saying," said Dora King. "She's buried in that horrid old arithmetic and seems to enjoy it. I wish I loved to study the way Linda does. Busy Bee is a good name for her."

"Why, it *is* her name," said Jinnie. "Did n't you know that? Look at the initials worked on her umbrella, if you don't believe me. It is all there in plain, bright red."

Before their quarrel Linda had rather liked to have Jinnie call her Bee. It was her own special name for her, and she used it in various endearing ways; but now she used it in such a variety of unpleasant ways that Linda hated it, and wished she had never been christened Belinda for her auntie.

"Buzz, buzz, buzz!" said Jinnie, imitating the motion of Linda's lips, but the noise was so like that of a bee on the wing that the girls laughed again. Nothing is easier than to make girls laugh, as Jinnie knew, and she enjoyed trying her power over them.

"'And gather sweetness all the day
From every opening flower,'"
she sang.

"Do you gather sweetness from that flower you're buzzing over, little bee? Is there honey in your arithmetic? I wish I could find some in mine?"

The laughter continued; none of the girls except Daisy suspected any malice back of Jinnie's mirth; most of them believed that Linda was so buried in her book as to hear nothing; while Jinnie alone knew that she heard every word, and was very uncomfortable, though she looked so indifferent. It was cruel to say anything more; but Jinnie had become perfectly reckless; her tongue had reached that state where it could not stop; and Linda's injured dignity drove her on to see how much she could tease her.

"Why don't you speak, B. B.?" she said. "Can't you answer polite questions? Oh, you're the queen bee, and we're nothing but the workers. Of course you can't talk to us. Would n't she look pretty prancing around under a crown and waving us all about with her sceptre?"

Holding her head high, and mocking Linda's haughty expression with a curl of her lip, Jinnie marched down the aisle, using her arm for a sceptre, which sent the girls flying to right and left with merry shouts.

"I'll never, never forgive her," thought Linda. "I'll tell auntie how disagreeable she is when I get home."

In spite of those thoughts Linda felt much more

like crying over her wrongs than avenging them. But she knew so well that that would only give Jinnie another opportunity to tease her, she remembered so many of Jinnie's jests about her "weeping eyes," that she struggled to keep back the rising tears; and fortunately the bell rang before they could come and disgrace her.

During the calling of the roll and reading of the Bible Linda was hardly conscious of anything but a tumult in her breast. She would have thought it a tumult of just anger if something in the Lord's Prayer had not suddenly shown her that it was unjust revenge. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Those words came into her mind, although she could hardly have told one word of the long chapter they had just been reading.

She knew that she had no right to repay Jinnie's unkindness. If she needed punishment, God would punish her. It was his right, not hers; she must forgive. It almost frightened her because she could not ask that her trespasses might be forgiven as she forgave those who trespassed against her.

The words put an end to her plans for vengeance, but they did not take away her anger. How could they, when she had such cause to be angry? She might not avenge her wrongs; but how could she forgive?

While Linda felt so helpless, she remembered that

God was able to work wonders in a little girl's heart, and that impulses beyond her control could be easily managed by him. Then she asked him to make her forgive Jinnie, so that she might be able to say that prayer which he taught his disciples long ago must ascend to him from a true heart.

As she went to arithmetic-class, the determination to be forgiving showed itself in her face. Her very desire to feel pleasantly towards Jinnie gave her a pleasant expression, which took away Jinnie's longing to tease her, and made her choose some one else for her next victim.

CHAPTER XX.

THERE was a knock at the door; one of the girls opened it, and Miss Davies went outside to speak to somebody.

"‘Shut, little door,’" said Jinnie, rising and bowing politely to the door which Miss Davies closed after her. "Young ladies, that makes me think of a story."

"Oh, tell it! tell it!" said a dozen at once.

"Hush! If I hear another word or a giggle I shall immediately sit down. There was once an old castle lying in ruins, and in the old days robbers used to hide the bodies of men whom they murdered for their money in its cellars and vaults, and their ill-gotten gains in the deep caverns all around it. Linda, how big your eyes look. Are you interested?"

"Oh, yes," said Linda.

"Do go on," said Fanny Fothergill. "Miss Davies will come back."

But Jinnie drew long breaths again and again, as if she were exhausted; for the whole pleasure of storytelling to her was witnessing her power over the girls. She loved to watch their eager looks, and feel that she could tease them with every moment added to their suspense. Their delight was in the thread of the story,

hers in the sudden breaks. But as she felt rather tenderly towards Linda at present, on account of the sweet face which she had turned upon her tormentor, she shortened the suspense in answer to the appeal in Linda's eyes.

"The robbers expected to bring these treasures forth whenever they wanted them, and have a good time enjoying the poor dead men's wealth; but one day they met the fate they deserved, for all the princes in the country banded together and came down upon the robber band and put an end to them."

Suddenly Jinnie dropped down in her seat, for she had detected the sound of a latch before ears less keen heard anything. She was famous for her stories, and her story-telling mood always seemed to come with rainy days; so that each girl who looked out of the window and saw the dark sky and steadily-falling rain eagerly anticipated recess. It would be too unpleasant for them to go out; and Jinnie, whether in a compliant mood or not, would probably be so anxious to talk that they could persuade her to finish the story. However, she was not to be depended upon, and might feel inclined to disappoint them.

But the moment the bell rang Daisy, having received a hint from the others, said indifferently,

"Come, Jinnie, you had better go on with your story right away, or you won't finish it this recess."

"Had I?" said Jinnie, preparing to eat an apple.

"Oh, do n't be disagreeable," said Dora King, who was not noted for her patience.

"Come, Jinnie, that's a dear," said Minnie Barry coaxingly.

But it was the petition in Linda's eyes which Jinnie answered. Her heart was still soft from those forgiving glances she had received.

"Where did I leave off?" she said.

"The princes had just put an end to the robbers," answered Linda promptly.

"Oh, yes. Well, after that neither princes nor common men could find the robbers' hidden treasures. They found plenty of bones, but no money; for they had taken greater care to hide their treasures than the bodies of the murdered men. This story was written by—let me see, what *was* the man's name?"

"Oh, who cares?" said Katie Crow.

"I must think of his name before I can go on," said Jinnie.

"Nobody wants to know his name, Jinnie," said Minnie.

"You're mistaken. I do, very much," Jinnie answered. "It is from the German. Now what was that old German called?"

"Hans?" suggested Daisy.

"Carl?" "Fritz?" "Wilhelm?" "Peter?" "Paul?" were all shouted at Jinnie, and all answered with "No."

"It's his last name I'm after all this time," said Jinnie.

"Is n't it Schmidt?" asked Linda, in a weary tone.

"Oh, no; it's Otmar," said Jinnie, smiling at Linda, "Mr. Otmar. And now I am coming to an adventure."

There was something thrilling in the way she said "adventure." The word was full of wild and delightful suggestions that caused each little pulse to beat faster. Jinnie's eyes and voice did as much as the plot itself for her stories. They were one thing read out of a book, and quite another told in her deep, changing tones, with her big eyes rolling here and there and making each girl she looked at feel as if every word must be true.

"Please tell us about the adventure," said Linda gently.

"With the greatest pleasure, my dear. There was a poor woodman. Now what was his name?"

"Oh, call him anything—Tom, Dick, or Harry. Do n't be particular about names," said Daisy.

"By-the-way, his name was not given. The poor woodman one evening was cutting a tree down, when he saw a gray monk come out of the ruins, then return towards the caverns. He stole after him, saw him beat upon a rock, heard him say, 'Open, little door,' 'Shut, little door,' and in a moment he had entered the cavern and was lost to sight. If Miss Davies had not shut

the door after her when she went into the hall I should never have thought of this story."

"Of course not. Go on."

"The woodman marked the place, and was sure that the robbers' treasures were to be found there; so one evening he came to the same spot, and tapping upon the rock, said, 'Open, little door.' In a moment he found himself in a dimly-lighted passage. 'Shut, little door,' said he, and it obeyed. Oh, I must eat my apple."

"Divide it," said Daisy. "Give us each a piece, or you won't finish it this recess. Why, it's nearly as big as a cabbage."

"None to spare," said Jinnie, putting her teeth leisurely into the large apple. "I need the whole of it for lunch."

She had apparently forgotten that she was a story-teller with an eager audience around her, and as she slowly nibbled looked out of the window with the greatest unconcern. Fanny Fothergill was really indignant.

"Come, girls," she said, "let's have a game of 'prison' in the cloak-room, and leave Jinnie with her apple."

Jinnie enjoyed her position too well to lose her audience. She must keep them, though she would pay them for their presumption in due time. Raising her voice, she said, as if there had been no interruption,

"Before his astonished eyes lay treasures of the

most magnificent description ; jewels beautiful beyond the power of my poor words to tell, and bags of gold piled and piled upon each other without number. He was a good woodman, and did not wish to take what was not his own ; but reflected that the wealth was as much his as any one else's, and so put in his pocket a few gold pieces with which to buy bread for his wife and eight children. He was very much afraid that he would never get out to return to wife and children ; but he heard a hollow, friendly voice saying, 'Come again,' and that encouraged him to try to escape. 'Little door, open ; open, little door,' said he. Again it obeyed the good woodman. 'Shut, little door,' he cried, when he was out in the open air ; and it shut behind him.

"He bought clothes and food for wife and children, gave alms to the poor, and the next week went back to the cavern. Once more he was admitted, invited by the hollow voice to 'Come again !' and allowed to return to his home.

"At last, after several visits, he began to consider himself a rich man, and thought he would like to know exactly how much he did possess ; so he went to a rich neighbor and borrowed a measure in which to measure his gold."

"How splendidly Jinnie is behaving," thought Fanny Fothergill. "No more interruptions now. I taught her a good lesson!"

"This neighbor was a miser," said Jinnie; "a wicked man who cheated widows and orphans; and the measure had chinks in it. What use do you suppose he made of those chinks? When he bought corn he let it fall through them into his bag, and kept filling it up as it fell through, so cheating the salesman. You see what a villain he was; how different from the poor woodman, the hero of my story, who thought first of his wife and children, and gave liberally to the poor."

Jinnie glanced around for a moment on her breathless audience. The room was so still that when she stopped speaking there was not a sound to be heard except the falling of the rain outside. It was just the day for a story. Jinnie felt her power over her listeners with a thrill of delight. But she made a short pause, for it was not part of her plan to tease them with pauses now.

The girls did not object to her resting for one moment, as it was quite evident that she needed to take breath after talking so rapidly. Fanny Fothergill congratulated herself again on the lesson she had taught Jinnie, and all the audience were proud of their successful strategy, and in good humor with themselves and the story-teller.

"In that measure," continued Jinnie, observing the little rustle of expectation that ran around the circle, and then the calm content with which each one settled down to hear the rest of the story—"in that measure,

which had been the means of so much wickedness, what did the miser discover when it was returned to him? Gold! Gold was what his greedy eyes saw, for some of the woodman's gold pieces had lodged in the chinks, unknown to him. I believe I'll change my seat," said Jinnie. "I think I shall feel better over there by Ada."

No one objected as she moved into a chair near the open space in the centre of the room.

"The wicked miser, when he saw that gold, believed that he had it in his power to ruin the poor woodman, and perhaps at the same time to make his own fortune. The woodman proved a very timid fellow, as the miser had hoped. He was terrified by threats of the rack, and at last told the miser the whole story, lest he should have him seized and tortured for theft.

"The miser was wild with joy, and told the woodman that if he would follow his directions they would bring all the treasure safely away; that he should have half, and that part should be given to the poor.

"The poor, weak woodman could do nothing but beg and plead; but all his entreaties did not move the miser, who pictured himself the greatest man in the land after getting possession of the hidden wealth. If the woodman had been firm and courageous, all might have gone well; but you shall see how even a good man may get into great trouble for lack of a little cour-

age. At last he yielded, promising to show the miser the secret door. He was not quite weak enough to ruin himself completely, for nothing would induce him to go farther than the door. All the way there the miser was thinking greedily that soon the whole treasure would be his, for he meant to trip the woodman into a deep well as soon as he was through using him; and not a penny did he intend giving to the poor, I can assure you."

Jinnie glanced around again. Eager faces, motionless figures, no sound but the rain outside—it was very gratifying to an orator approaching the climax.

"On and on they went together till they reached the cavern, and the woodman, sad and frightened, revealed the secret which he ought to have kept till his dying day. He had been treated too politely by that cavern to betray its secrets to wicked misers. But he did. The deed was done. The miser walked up to the spot. He knocked. He cried, 'Open, little door.'"

One more glance at her eager, attentive audience, and Jinnie leaped from the desk where she was sitting into the middle of the room.

A suspicion entered some of the girls' minds as she walked unconcernedly towards the cloak-room door, and said,

"I think I'll get my umbrella and take a little fresh air before recess is over."

"Are n't you going to finish the story?" asked two or three together.

"What story?" said Jinnie, with a sweet, unconscious look. "I've nothing to do with stories at present, my dear. I'm going out for fresh air. Won't some of you come? You all look as if you had been shut up in the house too long. I am sure you need air."

Threats and entreaties did not move Jinnie in the least; she was not to be bribed nor frightened. She had punished Fanny and her followers, and succeeded in getting off a joke on the whole school, which made her perfectly happy as she paced the garden path, her umbrella in one hand and her apple in the other. Some of the girls watched her from the window, walking back and forth, enjoying the apple and the rain, and tipping her umbrella so that all might see her bright, triumphant look.

"I'd like to shake her," said Fanny Fothergill.

"I never heard anything so mean," said Minnie Barry, "as to go on to the most interesting part of the story, just as if she never thought of stopping before she'd finished."

"I only wish I knew what happened to the miser in the cave," said Dora King.

"And to the poor woodman," said Linda.

"You never will know, children," said Daisy Webster; "so try and make the best of it."

CHAPTER XXI.

JINNIE continued bright and smiling all the morning. It did not seem to trouble her that the other girls looked dark and threatening; that she received no smiles in return, but glances of cold displeasure, if not of actual scorn. All those expressions of ill-feeling only showed how deeply she had affected the girls, and were proofs of her power. In the first enjoyment of her power she could afford to smile at their frowns.

She went out of the schoolroom humming a gay air, when they were dismissed; she took her little umbrella and went skipping off alone, still humming gaily; she knew that it was wise not to seek companionship for her walk home, as she believed that even Linda would scorn the shelter of her umbrella to-day.

"By-by, girls. I'm in a hurry," she said.

"Come here, all of you," said Fanny Fothergill. "I want to tell you something. Linda, don't hurry off; and call Janie and Dora back, will you? Here, Daisy and Ada."

Jinnie, glancing back as she turned the corner, saw Fanny in the midst of an excited group.

"Let them talk it out and get over it," said she, laughing. "To-morrow I'll fool them again, perhaps."

But at that very moment they were all determining not to "get over it" this time.

"It has happened once too often," said Fanny Fothergill. "We have let her go too far; she must have a lesson."

"She thinks she can rule the whole school," said Janie.

"No other girl would dare do what she does," said Ada.

"I think she ought to be put down," said Minnie, "It will do her good."

"And I." "And I," said others.

Only Daisy and Linda stood silent. Jinnie's two best friends did not at once lift up their voices against her; but when called upon to speak, Daisy admitted that she thought it would be well to teach her a lesson, and Linda said she did n't know; it was provoking not to have that interesting story finished, but she supposed Jinnie only did it for fun.

"It was n't fun for us," said Fanny Fothergill. "We all agree, Linda. Do n't stand out against us."

"I'm sure she has teased you enough, Linda," said Daisy. "You ought to know better than any one that she deserves a lesson."

"I do n't care anything about that now," said Linda, remembering what a little while it was since she had resolved to forgive, as she wished to be forgiven.

"You were wild to hear the end of the story, you

know you were," said Fanny Fothergill. "I noticed your eyes. They looked as if they were going to pop out of your head, you were so excited."

"I don't believe there was a girl in the school more disappointed than you, Linda," said Daisy. "It was certainly very unkind for Jinnie to treat her two best friends in that way, whatever you may think of the other girls. You must help us to teach her a lesson."

In her heart of hearts Linda was conscious of a desire to teach Jinnie a lesson. She had suffered a good deal at her hands to-day, and she would like to see the tormenter tormented a little. But how could she ask her Heavenly Father to forgive her as she forgave others, if she yielded to her revengeful inclinations?

"It is not revenge, you know, Linda," said Fanny, as if in answer to her thoughts; "it is justice."

"I will repay, saith the Lord," were words which Linda also heard as Fanny spoke; and she knew that if she gave her consent to punishing Jinnie she would do it in a spirit of revenge, whatever might be the motives in the other girls' hearts. How dreadful it would be to lose the privilege of saying the prayer which her dear Lord had given to his children! Was the pleasure of punishing a guilty friend greater than the pleasure of being able to speak to her Heavenly Father in his own divine words? Oh, no, indeed.

When Linda had reached that conclusion there was no longer any revenge in her heart. The desire to

take the girls' side had suddenly left her, and she said quite honestly,

"I do n't mind Jinnie's teasing now, and I think the best way to cure her will be not to notice it. She will be ashamed if we are all kind to her, and perhaps it will teach her the very best kind of a lesson. I know it will surprise her more than anything else we can do if we just treat her as well as ever."

"O Linda, you are too soft," said Ada.

"Linda, you are only one against the whole school," said Fanny Fothergill. "Consider yourself put out. We'll hear nothing more from that quarter. Jinnie Mansfield is to be sent to Coventry. From this day forth no one is to speak a word to her until such time as we all agree in an assembled meeting like the present. Those in favor of this motion signify it by saying Ay."

"Ay!" rose in one loud cry.

"Contrary, Nay."

"Nay!" said Linda's fine voice all alone, calling forth a shriek of laughter from the others.

"We do n't count you, Linda," said Fanny. "You know I told you you were to be considered an outsider."

"Do n't bother her; let her go her own way," said Fanny, taking Linda's hand under her arm and smiling down upon her as she saw moisture gathering under her eyelids. "Linda's brave, at any rate."

Fanny had a strong suspicion that it was right for

Linda to be also forgiving; but she was not quite prepared to forgive herself and to lead the others in the best way.

"The Umbrella Brigade will now advance," said she; and the girls moved on, each toward her own home.

When Linda reached hers, she no sooner put her umbrella away, took off her hat and rubbers and kissed auntie, than she prepared for a little season of reflection. She felt that she had great need of wise and earnest thought, that she bore a heavy responsibility, and that the happiness or unhappiness of many people depended on her actions.

She could not bear to think of Jinnie in Coventry. She shrank from all the unpleasant words and deeds of the next few days. One of her friends scorned and unnoticed by all the rest of her friends—it was dreadful. It must be prevented in some way. Who would do it? She had so little influence that she did not see how she could do it. If only there were some one powerful and skilful, some one who could sway the whole school in the right direction! How she wished that she were a leader!

"O dear," thought Linda, "it is a great deal easier to do what other people want me to than to make other people do what I want them to. I wish some different kind of a girl would make a reconciliation between Jinnie and the school; but I'm the only one

on Jinnie's side. I wish I could do it; I only wish I could."

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," said a voice in Linda's heart.

"All things," she repeated. "That means very hard things, of course; it must mean even such a hard thing as this."

What difference would her weakness make if God should give her his strength? Indeed, Linda remembered that God likes to use small and weak things to work his ends. "My strength is made perfect in weakness," said the voice in her heart.

Linda knew that this good deed she wished to do was not beneath her Heavenly Father's notice; that he would gladly stoop to help her, and perhaps enable her to work a reconciliation between Jinnie and the girls if she gave herself up to his guidance.

So, having the lowly and obedient heart which God requires in his service, Linda begged her Heavenly Father to make his strength perfect in her weakness, and to lead her as he pleased. Then she put on her hat to go over and see Jinnie, having no plan, but waiting for God to develop his.

As she walked along under her little umbrella she encountered difficulties, however. There always are difficulties at the outset of every right path.

She suddenly remembered that while she was going to make a reconciliation between Jinnie and the school,

she was unreconciled to her herself. She laughed for a moment, and then grew very serious, for what could she do? How should she dare attempt to become peacemaker when her own quarrel was unsettled? That, of course, must be settled first.

Linda grew very thoughtful as she approached Jinnie's house. She believed that she had quite forgiven her early in the day, and that she had put all pride out of her heart; but she found that there were some grains left when she saw the necessity of suing for Jinnie's friendship.

"I have tried to make up with her twice," thought Linda. "When it first began, I did my best, and she would n't be friends; and I 've tried ever so many times since. I was pleasant to her this morning after she had been tormenting me; and though she treated me better I could see she did n't want to be friends again. I can't make her like me the way she used to. I don't see what more there is to do, now that I 've tried over and over."

"Till seventy times seven," said the voice in her heart. "I say not unto thee, until seven times; but until seventy times seven."

Linda conquered herself before she reached Jinnie's gate, and went in so full of a determination to settle her own affairs that she forgot for the time her first undertaking in behalf of Jinnie and the school.

CHAPTER XXII.

SHE was in such a hurry to get in and have it all over that she did not stop at the gate to think what she should say ; but when the heart is right the right words are very apt to say themselves, and Linda's determination to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit in her heart was as good a preparation as any little speech she could have composed.

She hurried up the walk, and the door flew open, while Jinnie laughing and defiant stood before her, ready for battle.

"Say it and get done with it," said she. " You and the girls are all down on me. I know it. Scold away and have it over."

She looked intently at Linda for a moment, then ran and threw her arms around her neck.

"But there, you darling, you have n't come to scold!" she said. " You look as sweet as a peach. What have you come for? I know from your face you're not angry. Did your auntie send you with a message? Or are you going to stay and play? Or what?"

Linda looked and looked at her, her eyes telling the whole story, but no words coming to her lips.

"What did you come for, chickadee?" said Jinnie, giving her an affectionate shake.

"Reconciliation," said Linda.

"Well, you are the best little girl I know," said Jinnie, drawing her into the house. "Now, Linda, I'll tell you something: I felt real badly after I came home from school. I knew all the girls were angry at me, and I've been thinking I hadn't any friends left. But I wouldn't have let anybody know it. I'd have kept it to myself and laughed away all the time, no matter how much my heart ached. I thought Daisy even wouldn't forgive me, and I thought you were the angriest of them all; and now you're the first one to come and see me, after all I've done to you too. I've been horrid not to forgive you sooner; and I've teased you and teased you and teased you; and you've never said any hateful things to me. But then you have had a stiff, proud way ever since that quarrel, haven't you, dear? And it has made me angrier than if you said cross things to me. You've held your head so high, you know, and acted like a queen; then that made me want to show you that I was n't your slave, for all your airs."

"Yes, Jinnie, I know it," said Linda. "But I'm not going to have those proud feelings in my heart any more. I think I've got over them now, and I'm sorry I was so disagreeable; so please forgive me."

"Of course I will, you darling; and you forgive me too!"

After almost squeezing the breath out of Linda she drew back with a deep sigh of satisfaction and said,

"Oh what a sweet reconciliation! I do love a reconciliation. It is even nicer than the one I had with Daisy. I'll tell Daisy it's the best one I ever had, because she was talking about it this morning on the way to school. She was wishing she could bring it about, but you've done it all yourself, Linda."

That made Linda think of the other object of her visit, and she fell to wondering by what means she should accomplish a reconciliation between Jinnie and the school.

"Honey Bee," said Jinnie, "come over in the corner and I'll tell you the rest of that story, for I know you're aching to hear it. I'm never going to tease you again."

"I wish you'd never tease anybody again," said Linda.

"Well we'll think about it," said Jinnie, drawing Linda into the window seat. "We'll think about it, little preacher. Where did I leave off in that story? Let me see. The miser said, 'Open, little door.' The door obeyed, he entered the cave, and—"

Before Jinnie could go any farther Linda had laid her hand over her mouth.

"Don't tell me any more of it just yet," she said.
"I want to say something first."

"Aren't you anxious to hear the end? I thought you were wild to know how it turned out," said Jinnie.

"I am," said Linda. "But, Jinnie, are you sure we are just as good friends as ever?"

"Oh, better!" said Jinnie. "People always are after a reconciliation."

"Do you like me as well as you did before our quarrel?"

"Why better, of course, Honey Bee. I never liked you so much as I do now that you've been so sweet about making up."

"Then you must prove it," said Linda.

"Must I? Shall I get down on my knees? Or shall I give you my dear little turquoise ring that my darling grandmother gave me, and that I love more than all my treasures? Here, take it."

"No," said Linda, "that is n't what I want."

"I thought I was proving that I loved you, when I offered to tell you the rest of that story."

"But, Jinnie," said Linda, "I am not the only one that's anxious to hear how the story ends. All the girls were dreadfully disappointed. What I want is for them to hear the rest of it."

Jinnie shrugged her shoulders. "Well, as you're a pretty good little girl," she said, "I'll give my permission. I'll let you tell them just what I tell you."



"Why I could never tell it the way you do. There is more in your way than in the story itself; so to-morrow I want you to finish it at recess."

"For the whole school? Not I! How the girls would laugh at me! They'd have the joke on me then."

"I should think you would rather let them have the joke on you than to have them angry."

Jinnie shook her head.

"I believe you would," said Linda. "I'm afraid they wont forgive you right away unless you do something first, and I know you feel badly to have them all against you. Does n't it make your heart ache a little bit, Jinnie?"

"I've got you. What do I care for the rest of them?" said Jinnie, throwing her arm around her.

"But you do care, and I care; and I'm going to have you reconciled, and you've got to promise me. If you like me just as well as ever, you 'll prove it."

Jinnie tossed up her head, hummed a reckless tune, and looked rebellious for a moment; then she grasped Linda's arm, and said,

"I promise, little peacemaker. It will mortify me. I shall be so ashamed I wont know what to do; but I suppose you think that will be good for me. Oh, I deserve it all. Make me as unhappy as you please. Punish me and make me better."

"Yes, you naughty child, that is what I'm going

to do," said Linda. "And I shall say what the mothers say, 'It's all for your good. It's to make you happier in the end.' Think how happy you will be tomorrow after you are friends with the girls and everybody's reconciled, you and I, and you and the school. Now I must go, Jinnie. I only came for a few minutes. I have ever so much to do this afternoon."

Linda's first business was to call on Fanny Fothergill, for her work of reconciliation was only half done. She had had such success so far that she felt emboldened to lay her case before her schoolmate; and pleaded so well that at last Fanny promised to come over on her side, and see what she could do toward persuading the other girls to receive Jinnie's advances kindly.

Fanny agreed to go to school early the next morning; and as the girls came she talked to them one by one, and said Linda had had a talk with Jinnie and found her penitent; that she thought they had better not send her to Coventry, after all, but be forgiving and let her tell them the rest of her story at recess.

So when Jinnie appeared she was received with politeness, if not with cordiality. The girls said Good morning to her; and at recess they lingered about their desks when the bell rang, instead of hurrying out to the garden.

"Here's a good seat, Jinnie," said Linda, offering the use of her desk.

"You left off where the miser said, 'Open, little door!'" said Fanny.

"Go on; we're crazy to hear the rest," said Ada.

"There isn't much more of it, you know," said Jinnie. "The door obeyed him as it had obeyed the woodman. The miser went in. 'Shut, little door,' he said. It shut, and he rushed forward to fill his bags with the treasures which he saw. But he was a very different person from the woodman: he had never given to the poor nor done a kind deed with his wealth to any human being. Instead of hearing the invitation to come again, he heard soft steps approaching him, and looking up saw a great hound, with fiery eyes, coming toward him; then the voice which had spoken kindly to the woodman called, 'Away, rapacious man!' to him, and he rushed toward the door; but in his terror, instead of telling it to open, he kept calling, 'Shut the door! Shut the door!'

"The woodman waited a long time outside; at last he drew near the door and could hear low groans within. He tapped, and said, 'Open, little door.'

"There lay his wicked neighbor dead on the sacks he had brought to fill; and as he looked beyond him at the gold and jewels, all began slowly, slowly to disappear. Down, down they sank, down and down, till the whole treasure was lost in the depths of the earth.

"So, though he escaped with his life, the woodman missed great blessings for lack of a little courage. But

he had already enough at home to buy many comforts for his wife and children and to help the poor; and I hope he learned a lesson from the miser's dreadful death, and that you all, my dear little children, will neither be greedy nor cowardly, if you wish to be happy and prosperous." Jinnie rose and made a sweeping courtesy to her audience as she finished.

"It's a splendid story," said Fanny Fothergill.

"And you're a dear, good girl," said Daisy, throwing her arms around her.

"There's the dear, good girl," said Jinnie, pointing at Linda. "There's the little peacemaker."

But Linda's blushes prevented the other girls from complimenting her on the result of her good efforts. They only smiled their thanks to Linda for making peace among them all, and some one changed the subject.

Linda and Jinnie walked home from school together, and there was no longer any constraint between them. Everything was as pleasant and natural and as thoroughly friendly as it had been in the beginning.

"It seems exactly like old times," said Jinnie.

"Yes," said Linda. "I'm so glad."

What she was feeling particularly glad about was the victory she had won the morning before. How differently the two days might have ended if she had not determined to forgive instead of avenging her wrongs. If she had not resolved that she would say

the Lord's Prayer from a sincere heart, she and Jinnie might have had no reconciliation yesterday, and Jinnie and the school no reconciliation to-day. She thanked her Heavenly Father that he had inclined her heart toward forgiveness, and that he had helped her in her difficult undertakings.

She did not hear all Jinnie's chatter as these thoughts filled her mind and these thanksgivings rose silently from her lips. But then Jinnie required so few answers that she hardly knew whether Linda was listening or not. She was quite willing to do all the talking, and was sorry that she must come to an end at Linda's gate.

"Are n't you coming in?" asked Linda.

"Can't now; must go home to dinner."

"Are you coming over this afternoon?"

"I do n't know. I have n't thought anything about it."

Linda had hoped that she had been invited to tea, if not to dinner, and she rather dreaded going in to dine by herself. Auntie had gone out to spend the day, and she had promised to provide some pleasant company for Linda in her absence.

"But I suppose she forgot it," thought Linda, as she went into the house.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE very fact of her knowing that auntie was not at home made the house seem lonely as she opened the door. Her old dread of the still, orderly little parlor where she had spent so many homesick evenings came back to her, and she lingered a moment in the hall. But it would be as lonely up stairs, lonelier still in the dining-room, where she must eat her first solitary meal. "I believe I wont eat any dinner," she thought, and wished that auntie had not forgotten her promise to ask some pleasant guest.

"I wonder if I 'll never, never get over this homesickness," she thought, as she bravely crossed the parlor threshold. "It seems to get worse all the time, and I do try to be contented. I 'm afraid I have a discontented disposition ; but oh, how I do long to see my own darling mamma ! I can't help it ; but I ought to be very happy, everything has turned out so well, and the girls and Jinnie and I are all friends. I wish I could be happy, but it is *so* lonesome here ; if I could only go home I would n't care for anything else in the world."

Such were Linda's thoughts as she sank into a chair and folded her hands in a most miserable and hopeless manner. All her old heartache came back so

suddenly and with such power, that she would have cried in a moment, if her attention had not been attracted to a package in brown paper on the centre-table.

It was addressed very plainly to "Miss Linda Barto," and under her name was written, "A friend to spend the afternoon with you, and keep you from being lonely. It is another dream come true, and auntie hopes the fulfilment will give you as much pleasure as the dream has done."

Linda forgot her homesickness and loneliness, and could hardly wait to tear off the papers. She wondered if it could be a microscope, but hardly dared believe it was, until she came first to the box, and then inside the box found just exactly what she had wanted so long.

It was standing in a very large box, and was all ready for use; so she had nothing to do but to slip in one slide after another until she had seen everything, from the fly's tongue to the spider's foot.

She was not satisfied with looking at them once; and after she had looked at them all over and over, closely and critically, she began to examine objects in the room. She examined her own finger, the leaves of auntie's plants, a bit of cloth, a newspaper, a needle's eye; and at last left her fascinating companion to go to her solitary dinner, after hearing the bell ring twice and being summoned twice by the servant.

She did not linger long at the table, and returned to her new friend with a bit of meat, a crumb of bread, and an orange-seed. But even a microscope may become monotonous after a while, and she was ready at last to put it away.

"I will rest a little while," she thought, for her neck was beginning to ache from bending over so long. "Thank you for keeping me from being lonely and homesick," she said, putting the microscope into the box.

But the very mention of that word brought back a lonely, homesick feeling, and made her think with longing of her own dear mother so far away.

"Nothing, nothing will ever cure me but seeing her again, I do believe," she said. "I would rather sit and think about her than go and look through my microscope now. If I only had all these things I have wanted so much in my own home, how happy they would make me. But I don't believe anything can make me very happy away from home. Just as I think I've got over it and am growing contented, some little thing—like auntie's going away to-day—makes me as bad as ever. I believe I'll go over and see Jinnie; but, O dear, there is that composition to write! If I could only write poetry, I wouldn't mind, but auntie thinks it would never do."

From what auntie had seen of Linda's poetry she did not think it desirable to have it appear in public,

and had insisted upon her not offering a poem for her first composition. As prose was an untried field to Linda, she dreaded the first composition; and after several unsuccessful attempts she had put off writing it till the last moment, and to-morrow it must be handed in.

"I believe I'll write on homesickness," she thought. "It's the only subject I know much about. But there, I must n't think of that word again. I must n't think of my troubles or my joys till I get my work done—or I'll never do it. I'll forget home and the microscope, and go and practise and then write my composition."

She took the book of exercises and opened it on the piano, then sat down with a yawn and began to count, "One, two, three; one, two, three."

The sing-song tones of her voice, and the pounding of a dozen notes over and over, were so unmusical that Linda dashed off presently into a wild medley of her own, which was very noisy and ran the whole length of the keyboard. But she remembered that she had been rebuked by both her teacher and her auntie for wandering from her lesson in that manner, and began to drum those dreary, dozen notes over again and to count her "One, two, three."

She had perhaps been more disappointed in her music than in anything else. The fulfilment of that dream had come to her accompanied by so much drudgery that she was willing to confess, in this case,

that the dream was better than the fulfilment. Although she loved music so dearly, she did not learn very quickly, and had not begun to make it come out of her fingers at all, while her head seemed full of the most beautiful melodies. It was such tedious, discouraging work, learning to finger and to keep time, that she would not have been sorry to give up the lessons altogether. She used to think that time kept itself, and that fingers found the right way about the keyboard naturally. But, alas, that was a part of the dream which ended in much monotonous counting and tuneless pounding.

She practised three-quarters of an hour faithfully, only pausing for occasional reflections on the disappointments she had experienced in the fulfilling of her dreams, and then she gladly ran away from her captivity to take a look out of doors.

It was a dreary day, very warm for fall, but the air was moist and heavy, and it made one feel lifeless, and was not the best kind of weather for a little girl inclined to homesickness. Linda felt ashamed of her homesickness, with the microscope lying by her on the table. If she could only take it home and show it to the children, how thoroughly she would enjoy auntie's beautiful gift!

She ran away from the window to get her paper and lead-pencil, and when she came back opened the window wide, for she thought she would not mind the

dampness and heat that came in if only a breeze would come with it. But no breeze came near Linda.

How did people write prose? she wondered. She tried and tried to begin; then she took a book from the table to see if she could find any help there. Perhaps if she read a little prose she would discover how it was done.

But the book proved to be poetry, and the first words her eyes fell upon were, "No Baby in the House." In another moment she was reading the poem.

"No baby in the house, I know,
'T is far too nice and clean;
No tops by careless fingers strewn
Upon the floor are seen :
No finger-marks are on the panes,
No scratches on the chairs,
No wooden men set up in rows
Or marshalled off in pairs ;
No little stocking to be darned,
All ragged at the toes ;
No pile of mending to be done,
Made up of baby-clothes ;
No little troubles to be soothed,
No little hands to fold ;
No grimy fingers to be washed,
No stories to be told ;
No tender kisses to be given,
No nickname, 'Love,' and 'Mouse ;'
No merry frolic after tea—
No baby in the house."

The words had touched a heart which was already full, and Linda's homesickness broke forth in sobs.

Oh, how she would like to hear the sound of her baby brother's little feet pattering about in that still room! How glad she would be to have his voice disturb her, even with its crossest cries. How she wished there were marks of his little, grimy fingers all over those clear, clean window-panes. How she would like to wash windows and fingers once more. How she would fly around the room to pick up his toys and put everything in order after the dear "careless fingers"—if only the fingers and the disorder were there. How she wished she had a little, ragged stocking to darn. Oh, would n't she like to get at that big basket of mending and help reduce the pile once more. If she only could soothe the little troubles, tell stories, give tender kisses, use the dear old nicknames, and have the merry frolics after tea again!

But she wiped away her tears, and felt as if she were a great coward to yield to the emotions which she had fought against so many times, and so often fancied she had conquered. That composition *must* be written. How easily the inspirations used to come at home; and now that she had quiet and leisure to indulge them, they would not come at all. "But I *must* write something," she said.

Just then the breeze for which she had been waiting came in at the open window, and was very welcome to

her burning cheeks and eyes. She wiped the tears away and lifted her face to the breeze.

"I'll take it for my subject," she said, and wrote on the paper, "Little Zephyr's Mission."

She felt the old tumult in her brain as one idea crowded quickly upon another. It was an inspiration; words flowed fast from the end of her pencil; her cheeks glowed; her eyes brightened; once more she enjoyed the delights of a composer and the desire for fame.

She was so well pleased with the result of her efforts that life looked brighter to her after the composition was finished. By that time the zephyr had become a great wind, which blew noisily and dismally all around the lonely house. It lifted the rain, which was falling heavily now, and dashed it against the window where Linda sat. It shook the trees till the wet leaves fell in showers; and altogether it was the last companion to be desired in auntie's absence.

Between the stillness and loneliness within and the storm without Linda would have felt very dreary except for her microscope and her successful composition. She looked at one and reread the other often before bedtime came. She did, it is true, occupy herself in a less pleasant and profitable manner now and then: once in a while she yielded to the influence of the storm and the lonesomeness, and shed a few homesick tears; but the day passed much better than might have been expected.

At nine o'clock she was so sleepy that she thought she would not sit up any longer to thank auntie for the microscope, but would write a reply to her note. So when auntie came she found a small envelope addressed to herself on the parlor-table.

Linda's note did not tell her that she had missed her, that she had found the storm a dreary companion, and that she had longed for her mother and her home more than ever before, in spite of all she had had to console her. It only said :

"DEAR AUNTIE: Thank you very much for the beautiful microscope. It is lovely to have dreams come true; and you are a dear, good auntie to leave such a nice friend to keep me company while you were away.

"Your loving

"LINDA."

But auntie knew both sides of the story, though she had only heard one. She read part of the other side on the little girl's cheeks when she went to see if she were well tucked in for the night. There were tears which she knew had been shed for the mother who was far away; and auntie smiled as she stooped down to kiss them softly. If Linda could have waked at that moment to see and understand auntie's smile, how quickly one would have illumined her own face, and scattered every trace of sorrow away.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FRIDAY had come, and the compositions were to be read that afternoon. School closed half an hour earlier on Friday, at one instead of half past, and it was always a welcome day on that account. But besides the half hour given them, the girls all enjoyed the little variety which Friday made in the dull routine of their regular studies. One week there were compositions to be read, and every other week readings or recitations. Recitation week was more popular; for unless Katie Crow or Minnie Barry happened to write a good composition there was nothing which the little girls considered worth hearing down stairs.

After the reading of their own compositions they always went up stairs to hear those of the young ladies. These were rather beyond their comprehension, and had never given much pleasure to any of the children before Linda came. They were just far enough beyond her comprehension to please her. She did not find as great a charm in what she perfectly understood as in what puzzled her a little; and the young ladies were gratified by the rapt attention with which she listened, as well as by a remark she had made to Daisy, and which Daisy had repeated to her big sister. "I

think the young ladies' compositions are as lovely as poetry," she had said.

Her efforts to imitate their style had prevented her succeeding with her own compositions. She could not write like them, and did not write like herself. She had been excused from a composition the first time, and after making a great failure the second time, auntie had begged another excuse for her; so she was to make her first appearance in public to-day.

Miss Davies read one composition after another until Linda thought hers would never come. She listened anxiously to hear "Little Zephyr's Mission" announced, and at last there were only three papers left on Miss Davies' table. Well, the next one must be hers. Her heart beat a little faster, for she could not help hoping that it would bring her some of the pleasures of fame. How glad she should be if all the girls who were looking idly about the room while Ada's was being read should listen attentively to "Little Zephyr's Mission."

But that was not the title of the next one which Miss Davies took up, and the eyes of the whole school continued to wander everywhere but towards their teacher. They wandered through the reading of still another. "I wonder why she leaves mine till the very last," thought Linda. "Can it be because it is the best? But the girls say she reads the best first. Oh, I hope she does n't think mine is the very worst."

She felt discouraged by that fear, and almost hoped that if it was only worthy of the lowest place Miss Davies would not read it at all. But her surprise was very great when the last composition proved not to be hers, and she discovered that Miss Davies was going to omit it altogether.

She went up stairs to the young ladies' room with a heavy heart. She felt so ashamed and disappointed that she did not want any one to look at her and discover her confusion. It seemed as if she could not face that room-full of young ladies, as if everybody must know that she had written the very poorest composition of them all—one which Miss Davies considered too poor even to read.

She listened to Daisy's sister's composition as well as she could. It was all about bright flowers and blue skies and gentle breezes—just the style she liked best. What she heard of it she thought very poetical; but she could not listen as attentively as usual; it was hard to fix her thoughts upon anything but her own disgrace.

"I wrote about breezes, too," she thought. "Perhaps, if I had put in the flowers and blue skies, mine would have been good enough to read first, instead of not at all. How pleased Miss Gracie Webster must feel to have hers read first."

Linda stole a glance at her, but she seemed to look just as usual. While she was wishing that she could

have written Miss Gracie's beautiful composition, had it read first, and worn her honors with as calm and unmoved a countenance, her attention was suddenly withdrawn from Miss Gracie by the sound of very familiar words.

"'Little Zephyr's Mission,'" read Miss Mackintosh, the principal, from a paper she held in her hand. "This composition was written by one of the little girls, but as Miss Davies tells me that she overlooked it down stairs, and we do not wish to leave it out altogether, I hope the young ladies will not mind listening to it."

"LITTLE ZEPHYR'S MISSION.

"Out in the wild wood, where the forest-trees are waving and the bright blue-bells ringing, a little Zephyr makes her home in the bosom of a wild lily; now sporting with the sunbeams as they dart amid the flowers, and again dancing with the water-bubbles above the silvery stream.

"As she was lying one evening in her daisy-bed she seemed to hear a sweet, low angel-voice whisper in her ear, 'Canst thou not do some good in this wide world, so full of grief and sorrow?' She pondered long upon these words, 'Do good;' she looked back upon her past life of pleasure, and could see no good that she had done.

"In a splendid mansion in the hot, dusty city, wri-

thing in agony upon his little bed, is a beautiful boy. His curly hair is matted upon his fair brow, and he turns restlessly upon his little couch, breathing out his greatest desire, ‘Oh for a spring breeze to come and cool my burning brow !’

“Zephyr heard the cry; she entered the chamber of sickness, and fanned him till he slept and dreamed of angels playing with him in the beautiful gardens of heaven. And then, as the twilight lingers and the shades of night draw nigh, she wafts him gently to heavenly shores, where myriads of waiting cherubs welcome him to the home of the blest.

“Off in a secluded corner of an old churchyard, under an aged yew-tree, stands a little gravestone, bearing the inscription, ‘Our Willie;’ and none save Zephyr ever visit that lonely spot; no arms are thrown around that grave with a longing to clasp Willie in their embrace; no lips kiss that sod and breathe out a prayer that they may join Willie in the spirit-land; no hands plant violets and daisies upon that little mound—no, none but Zephyr mourn now for Willie.”

Linda was so pleased that her composition had been slighted down stairs only by accident, and that the young ladies listened to it attentively, that she no longer regarded it as a failure; and when a sob was heard after its sad ending, then certainly she might consider it a success. To be sure, it was only tender-hearted little Amy Moore, who cried very easily, but

Linda was greatly pleased; and when, after school, several of the little girls told her that it was "perfectly lovely," so "sad and sweet," she felt that she had fame enough to satisfy her. But Jinnie's praise was the sweetest she received.

"Oh, you dear darling, it was lovely," she said. "I could have cried when Miss Mackintosh read that part where Zephyr blew on his lonely little grave."

As Linda walked to her own gate, after Jinnie had left her, she had an opportunity to reflect on the pleasures of fame. She had been longing a great while for what she had received to-day. Her composition had proved successful, the girls had praised it—even Jinnie, who was inclined to be critical about compositions. Schoolgirls' praises were better than Polly's tears. Certainly she had tasted of real fame to-day, and another of her dreams had come true. "*Why, all my dreams have come true now!*" thought she.

And was she perfectly happy at last—as happy as she used to think she would be? Or was there one dream—a new dream, better than any of the rest—which was still unfulfilled, and which left her heart unsatisfied?

Instead of hurrying to tell auntie the good news about her composition, Linda fell to thinking, and walked slowly as she thought. Why was it that such a picture of home rose before her eyes? that she remembered so distinctly how she always used to run

and tell mamma when any good thing happened to her? how the best part of every good thing that did happen was the telling mamma?

After all the triumphs of the day her heart was sinking, sinking again. Would nothing lift it up—not even fame? Was it a hopelessly discontented, heavy heart? Could nothing make her quite happy? Oh, Linda was sure that if that best dream, of putting her arms around her mother's neck again could come true, she would enjoy the fulfilment of all the others. Everything would seem complete then—nothing could satisfy her while that longing was in her heart. There was something lacking in the lessons that she used to find so fascinating at home; something disappointing in her music, in her microscope, and in her fame. But even the disappointments she could laugh at if she were at home.

Did the Good Shepherd know, she wondered, how discontented she was still, how all her benefits had failed to satisfy her, and how she found it more impossible every day to live apart from her mother's love? Why, of course he knew, and yet she would like to tell him the story.

So as Linda walked along, lost in one of her deep reveries, she was going over the whole history of her life at auntie's in a few rapid thoughts; and what she said to her Good Shepherd was that she thanked him for every dream which had come true, but more than

anything else for the green pastures and still waters by which he had led her when she was most sad and lonely. She thanked him for the nights when he had been the only Friend to stay with her, for the losses which had brought her such a gain as the near, real presence of the great King.

But now that she had stayed out of the home-fold long enough to learn that she could find Him everywhere; now that through absence from her father and mother she had learned to know Him as both father and mother, Linda begged that the days of her pilgrimage might end, and that she might go back with all her lessons learned, all her experiments tried, and the value of her home proved greater than all wealth besides, to stay there for ever a happy, contented little girl.

She felt so sure that God would understand the whole story, sympathize with her and answer her prayer, that she ran home swiftly and told auntie of her fame with such a merry voice and glad face, that she wondered for a moment if the child was going to be contented with her, after all.

But in the next breath Linda had begun to tell auntie the whole story which she had just told her Heavenly Father. She never knew afterwards how it happened. She had not meant to do it. It was all out before even the thought of telling her could enter her mind.

"I knew it all, my darling," said auntie; "and I should not have waited much longer for you to speak, for I could see that that little heart was getting fuller and fuller every day, and I did not mean to let it quite break. I don't blame you in the least, dear. You need not fear that. I have had a darling mother of my own, and understand all about it. There have been various plans in my mind. Only this morning I began a letter to your mother telling her to come here for you, for her heart is getting ready to break, too, Linda. I have discovered from her letters that she cannot live without you much longer. I was going to surprise you with finding her here some day when you came in from school; then I thought perhaps you would rather go home and surprise all of them."

"Oh, yes, I would," said Linda. "But, auntie, it seems so mean and ungrateful to want to hurry away."

"Never mind that, dear. You will come back with Polly some time to make me a visit, wont you?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!" said Linda.

"And I am going to make some arrangements about your school and your music at home, which I think will be pleasant for both you and your mamma. Now you shall go to-morrow if you like. You and the microscope shall start on the morning train, and auntie wishes you much joy together."

The next day, as a certain family we know were

sitting at dinner, who should appear at the door but their darling Linda! They all said they should never forget how the front-door slammed, how those strange feet came racing along the hall-floor, how the dining-room door flew open, and how Linda looked as she rushed towards them. It was a day worth being long remembered in the Barto family when their little mother came back to stay. It was a great and happy day, and the first of a better order of things.

For their little mother had made the valuable discovery that "East or west, home is best;" she had learned to be satisfied with the life God had appointed her; she had proved by her own experience that "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" and if she dreams too much in these days, it is more of what she can do for others than of what she can gain for herself; it is not of winning fame as a writer or musician, but of winning the grateful love of those she loves best.





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